

THE GOSPEL FOR BOTH WORLDS



EDWARD EELLS



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THE GOSPEL FOR BOTH WORLDS

TEN SERMONS PREACHED IN OUR FATHER'S
HOUSE (MEMORIAL CHURCH) WORCESTER

BY

EDWARD EELLS

AUTHOR OF "CHRISTLIKE CHRISTIANITY,"
"A MISSION TO HELL"



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“What in me is dark
Illumine, what is low raise and support;
That to the height of this great argument
I may assert eternal Providence,
And justify the ways of God to men.”

— *Milton.*

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THE GOSPEL FOR BOTH WORLDS

I

THE ONLY GOSPEL

“Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be anathema. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be anathema.”—*Galatians i, 8 and 9.*

The gospel for both worlds! It is no new invention: it offers no new terms of salvation; but it is the same dear gospel of salvation through the atoning blood and the redeeming grace of the Saviour who has died for me. There is no other availing gospel, as Paul declares in the previous verse. Peter also testifies, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby ye MUST be saved.”

Nobody saves but Jesus. Others may counsel, instruct, appeal, command; but only Jesus saves. On a Tyrolese pulpit a carved wooden arm holds out the cross. Nothing is worth the name of gospel preaching that doesn't do that.

Outside of Christ, there is no availing gospel in morality, for morality cannot take away the

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condemnation for past misdeed: there is no gospel in culture; for culture cannot regenerate the inclination of an evil heart: there is no gospel in social service unaccompanied with the spirit of Christ: there is no gospel in religious observance; for none can reconcile his own — much less another's — soul with God.

“ Could my zeal no respite know;
Could my tears forever flow;
These for sin could not atone:
Thou must save, and Thou alone.”

It is such an old-fashioned sounding gospel, that we feel almost embarrassed by our singularity in standing for it. Everything else, almost, is being preached to-day; but nothing else is worth a rush to save a sinner's soul. It is the faith of our fathers: it is the everlasting gospel. As Theodore Cuyler suggests, it is built like the Eddystone lighthouse, upon the rock of ages. It has breasted the storms of centuries. It has guided millions safe into the port of heaven. Other lights have flickered for their hour here and there. Enthusiasts have lighted their beacons; wreckers have displayed their false signals; but when these go out in the night, the gospel of God's mercy through Christ shines on and saves.

This is the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. The publican who had never heard of Jesus, but cried, “ God

be merciful to me a sinner!" the psalmist who foresaw little of God's plan of salvation, but prayed, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions": these were justified and saved by the merits of the Christ who had not yet died for their sin. He who from darkest heathenism calls by any name — Jehovah, Allah, Vishnu — upon God for pardon and help to live anew is saved by the one Mediator between God and man — whom he will recognize and adore in Paradise. The man whose honest thinking has not yet brought him to the foot of the cross; but who believes in duty and kindness, and, even unconsciously, makes his life a prayer of righteous effort, this man will be saved by virtue of the grace of God in the indwelling Christ whom he does not yet fully understand.

For a race of entirely correct people, such as we are not, there might be some message of good news in God's general benignancy worthy of being called in some weak way a gospel; but for sheer sinners like us, how can there be any good news, how can there be any gospel, how can there be any glad tidings, until our guilty, sin-loving souls come under the blood, the precious blood of Christ which cleanseth from all sin?

"When wounded sore the stricken soul
Lies helpless and unbound,

One only hand, a pierced hand,
Can salve the sinner's wound.

When penitence has wept in vain
Over some foul, dark spot;
One only stream, a stream of blood,
Can cleanse away the blot.

Lift up Thy bleeding hand, O Lord;
Unseal that cleansing flood;
We have no solvent for our sin,
But Thine own precious blood."

It may not be so much what we can do to please God; but what Christ does for us and in us and with us that saves us. A Scotch lad presented himself before the elders for admission to the church. They hesitated by reason of his youth, but reluctantly concluded to examine him, and began with the subject of regeneration.

"Do you think, Sammy," said the pastor, "that you have been born again?" "I think I have," was his answer. "Well, if so, whose work was that?" "Oh, God did a part, and I did a part." The elders around shook their heads. But the minister asked again, still kindly. "Ah, what part did you do, Sammy?" "Why, I opposed God all I could; and He did the rest."

Will you think me exceedingly narrow and reactionary if I suggest that this is a religious experience, however oddly expressed, which may really be worth something? That is because it is founded upon something.

Does it ever occur to us that we may be just a bit condescending toward the Almighty in our modern type of conversion? We make what we call a "decision for Christ" in some casual way. Perhaps we sign a card stating succinctly that we desire hereafter to 'lead a Christian life.' Then we join some church, and the incident is closed.

Consciously or unconsciously, true conversion is perhaps nine-tenths passive. We turn, and *become* converted. We yield ourselves tremblingly to God's mighty grace. "For by grace are ye saved through faith, and *that* not of yourselves; it is the gift of God."

Dear friends, what are we trusting in? Our own fickle, changeful choice of God? God pity us! is there any sure gospel or good news in that? We are but clinging to the edge of a granite cliff — by our numb finger-tips. But what are we trusting in? Our serene ability to follow the example of Jesus? We say we admire and love his character (with a conscientiously small "h") and we intend to follow him whithersoever he goeth. Then, perhaps, next week, or the week after, we may be admiring and loving the example of Buddha, or of Swami Vivekananda, or Omar Khayyam, or Mrs. Eddy, and following that? Where is the gospel in all this?

But what are we trusting in, anyway? Our moral advantages, our ethical culture? There

have been found men with equally good beginnings in the state penitentiary.

These ropes of straw may seem for a time to meet the easy conditions of our easy terrestrial life: are we ready to trust in them for eternity? Do we crave no arms of a living God, no arms of a personal Saviour about us as we swing out over the abyss? How long will our soul's house of a fine-seeming, self-centered character stand when the winds of eternity blow, when its rains descend, when its floods come and beat upon it? Is it not founded upon the sand? But our sin! What will we do with that? The sin which perhaps we have forgotten: the sin we smile about to-day. Will just following the beautiful example of Jesus for an eternity wipe away that black score? Will it take the weight and the condemnation off our soul? Will it amputate that importunate arm of the soul which creeps out and reaches after evil? Dear friends, there is only one gospel, and I am not ashamed to tell you this morning what I am trusting in. I am trusting in a God who is greater than my heart and knoweth all things; who when I confess my sin is faithful and just to forgive my sin and to cleanse me from all unrighteousness. He is faithful and just to do it; because His own dear Son, very God of very God, has borne my sin in His own body on the cross of Calvary. Believing on Him, we are saved for time and saved for eternity. We no longer need to think

of hunting up something in our record that we may present it at heaven's gate. Jesus says "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me."

Is anything else truly Christianity but this — unless it be by unconscious assimilation? No religion is wider than ours in its genial influence, none narrower in its one essential. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus."

"On Christ the solid rock I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand."

What else is there to stand surely upon in this world or the next? If then there is to be a gospel and a gospel message in both worlds, as, by the help of God's Spirit, I hope easily to prove in succeeding sermons of this series; then it can only be the same gospel of life and mercy in Christ. No man can be saved in this world, and no man can be saved in the next world, by simply following the light of nature to the extent of doing the best he knows how. That is simply because he doesn't, you know. Dante has inscribed over the gateway of his Inferno the sentence, "Ye knew your duty, and ye did it not." That takes us all in; except as this or that one is trusting in the only Saviour of sinners. No salvation for the heathen in this world or the next, no salvation for anyone except

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by knowing Christ, whom to know is life eternal.

Does any man think he can sow his wild oats here, and perhaps reform in hell? Reform in Satan's inner kingdom, with the uplifting influences slighted here withdrawn, with the society of the good and pure withdrawn, with the deadly delusion and fascination and delirium of sin a million fold strengthened upon his soul? Do we send our boys to Five Points or Leadville to reform? Standing upon hell's pavement made of earth's broken resolutions, will any man be inspired to make more and keep them? How long would it take him to climb from hell to heaven in the strength of his own dogged resolution, without a sigh of penitence, without a prayer for grace to overcome? The moralist's hell may be as hopeless as that of the renegade; if it is equally exclusive of the grace of God that bringeth salvation.

On the other hand, that there is any essential limitation in the gospel of Christ by reason of which it could not avail, God willing, to save penitents in hell as well as on earth, who will affirm? Christ tasted death for every man. He is able to save unto the uttermost all who come unto God through Him. If He can save men on the Bowery, or women on Bleeker St.; He can save them in hell.

An account by Mrs. Whittemore of the "Door of Hope" has for its frontispiece two portraits of

the same face. The first is of a young woman as she came to them, a face prematurely haggard and weazened in vice and crime, shameless, hard, depraved in every line, wretched beyond belief and blear-eyed with debauchery. The companion picture is of the same face two years later — a modest, intelligent, spiritual woman, beautiful in her penitence, radiant in the joy of a soul made new. A greater transformation could hardly be conceived either here or in hell, and our Saviour is working these transformations day by day.

Surely He would yearn to work them in eternity. He is the same yesterday, to-day and forever. By every instinct and impulse of His nature, He is eternally a saviour. He could not be content to suffer and die for small results. Predicting His death upon the cross, Jesus declared "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto me." Thank God! He simply said, "ALL." Not only all men but all spirits of the universe, all demons of hell. Give Him time; and see.

On two recent occasions our thoughts have been turned to the text, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" To-day it comes to us with the possibility of a new meaning. So great salvation! so *great* salvation! We know not how great it may be. Probably it is greater than we have ever dreamed — longer, broader, deeper. If Christ's salvation

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were some small, partial, changeable thing; we might be excused for neglecting it, we might scorn to bother with it. But if it is held out steadily, consistently, yearningly through the ages; of how much greater condemnation shall we be worthy for neglecting it! It may be a small matter to miss a trolley car; but a serious one to miss an ocean liner. So GREAT SALVATION — the only, the infinite, the eternal. It is offered to you and to me to-day. We neglect it at our unspeakable peril. Now is the accepted time: now is the day of salvation. Turn ye, turn ye; for why will ye die?

II

THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL

“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation and kindred and tongue and people.”—*Revelation xiv, 6.*

In the Greek there is no article, either definite or indefinite, in our text, and the word everlasting — as everywhere else but in one passage of the New Testament — means simply æonian or “age-lasting.” John writes, “I saw another angel flying in mid-heaven having æonian glad tidings.” This gospel of our blessed Bible, which I tried to outline last Sabbath is indeed æonian, age-lasting glad tidings. It is good news for the eternities. It is the everlasting gospel —

FIRST: IN ITS EFFICIENCY FOR THE EVERLASTING SALVATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL SOUL.

This is the ‘old time religion.’ It is 999,000 millionths of vital Christianity. It is the element of our sacred religion which perhaps we hear least about from the pulpits of to-day; yet it is infinitely the element of greatest power, of greatest consequence, or greatest meaning. Our fathers in the ministry stood in the pulpit and thundered forth eternity! *eternity!* ETERNITY!

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For us to do less is to betray by silence our lack of a strong conviction of the immortality of the human soul. If we believe that men are to live forever — this man and that man and every man — what else is there on God's earth to talk about, and pray over, and wrestle for but their eternal salvation? We glory in the influence of Christianity, for better conditions in this world, we exalt its high ideal of human brotherhood, we pray continually, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on *earth* as it is in heaven" ; yet take out of our religion its claim alone to provide a way of eternal salvation for immortal souls; and you do not leave in it power to permanently lift men one half inch on earth. If there is no future life with its eternal choice for heaven or hell; why should I be fool enough to bother over questions of right or wrong, much less over anything that bears the name of religion? Let me get the most out of my little insect life here, like any other animal. Let each live for self in the most enlightened way he can. Down with your Christlikeness, down with your high ideals: let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.

Such audience as Christianity has in our modern world, it holds because it still has now and then, here and there, a word about eternity; because among the million busy thoughts of men one goes now and then, here and there, questioning, wondering out upon the future life.

For one soul and another Christ's gospel is still an everlasting gospel; it is profitable not only for the life which now is, but for that which is to come. It is a gospel for both worlds to our own individual souls. We believe in it; we love it; we are ready to lose all for it; because it extends our outlook beyond this little, meager life; because it lifts our life here to the dignity of a pilgrim's progress; because it cures the homesickness of the soul; because it makes the humblest lot rich in hope, because it clears up every mystery of want and pain and sorrow with the confidence of a new beginning beyond.

This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and that entereth into that within the veil. Jesus saves me, and He saves me for both worlds. He lifts me out of hell on earth, He saves me eternally from hell beyond, and makes every day of my little life here glad in the light of heaven. This is the Saviour I need, a Saviour for eternity, One who has already prepared a place for me in His Father's house of many mansions, One who is coming for me at the end of my earthly life to receive me unto Himself, that where He is there I may be also. Without Him I cannot live; for without Him I dare not die. He is my only hope for time and for eternity. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. With a living faith in the living Christ, it is a blessed thing

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to live, and a more blessed thing to die. We enjoy living as no one else can enjoy it; and what is a good deal more, we expect to enjoy dying too —

“ Jesus can make the dying bed
As soft as downy pillows are;
While on His breast I lean my head,
And breathe my life out sweetly there.”

Life! life! life! this is the thing we crave — fuller, gladder, richer, sweeter, longer even to eternity: It is the infatuation of living that makes fools forget eternity, makes the wise remember it. Jesus came that we might have life, that we might have it more abundantly here; simply because we have it consciously as a little beginning of life hereafter.

“ Thou of life the fountain art;
Freely let me take of Thee:
Spring Thou up within my heart,
Rise to all eternity.”

I said that this gospel, eternal in its offer of eternal salvation for the individual soul, explains all the mysteries of life, makes up for its want, and pain, and sorrow. I spoke too fast. It might, if each of us lived and died only to himself. But we are bound in one bundle of life: a thousand cords unite us heart to heart: heaven itself cannot satisfy each for himself alone. The soul that has found Christ, and finding Christ,

has found heaven; is still unsatisfied until other related souls have found Christ and heaven too. Heaven will not be heaven to us without our loved ones. And as our hearts broaden in the love of Christ, a greater and greater number of people come within our sphere of those we could not bear eternally to miss from heaven. Think of all the people you know: how many of them could you quite contentedly and to all eternity; if it were God's will; miss from heaven? Is there one? is there one? is there one? Then where is your Christlikeness? The man who has wronged you most: the woman you have most cause to dislike — could you altogether enjoy heaven knowing that that one was writhing hopelessly in hell? You might stand it a thousand years; but now you are starting on your second thousand, knowing that this too is only one breath of eternity: can you forget Mrs. Jones; can you get poor Mr. Brown out of your mind? There is one soul you know hopeless forever in hell. There is no grudge in your heart against it. Heaven wouldn't be heaven, if you could bear a grudge there. The sore spot he or she made in your heart has long been soothed in heaven's sea of love and rest. There is no refuge for you in indifference to that soul's fate. Could heaven be heaven to a soul indifferent to the fate of one other soul? Suppose you saw your cruellest enemy pinioned in a wrecked and burning railroad train: suppose that face

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writhing in its agony turned toward you? Could you bear to look, could you bear not to look without tearing at those burning timbers even with bare hands if only you could save? Jesus on the cross prayed, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do:" what would the cry of your soul in heaven be to God for your worst enemy languishing in hell?

And if for him; what for the fourteen hundred million neighbors of ours living on this planet to-day: what for all the equal numbers of generations gone before — each one your unknown brother, sister — with like sorrows, like joys — needing Christ just as you; yet knowing Him so little or never at all? What would your irrepressible cry to God be for each of these, until it was shown you that the last one was to be saved?

Lives touch lives strangely in God's world. There is no dark problem for one life that sooner or later is not a problem for all. No life of all the million millions can be so glad with one life marred. It is glorious to be one of God's elect; but surely He whose name is love could not elect any soul to an eternal selfishness shrugging its shoulders contentedly on the brink of another's hell. Would the gospel of its own eternal salvation be altogether glad tidings of great joy, would it be an eternal, æonian gospel, all-satisfying, everlasting, with now and then the faint echo of a groan coming from distant hell?

Thank God! the plain message of His whole Word, as we shall search for it here during the coming Sabbaths, does not leave us to contemplate such eternal despair. The gospel of Christ is truly an everlasting gospel not only in its efficiency for the everlasting salvation of the individual soul; but —

SECOND: IT IS EVERLASTING IN ITS OFFER OF SALVATION TO LOST AND PERISHING SOULS.

John says, "I saw an angel flying in mid-heaven having æonian glad tidings to proclaim unto them that dwell on the earth and unto every nation, and tribe, and tongue, and people." And so the angel proclaimed to the shepherds, "Behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people."

Let me say in the start that I sympathize earnestly with those earnest minds to whom this broader, longer gospel brings a shock of fear and of incredulity. It seems almost too good to be true. The very relief of its waking causes a recoil back toward the old nightmare. The question rises very quickly: if then there is to be no limit to the offers of God's mercy in Christ Jesus; if indeed, in this sense too it is an everlasting gospel, eternally to be extended as long as there are perishing souls; how then can we hope to bring men to a repentance which may be postponed indefinitely without losing its final opportunity?

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There is no truth of God's word so plain or so sacred but some unstable ones have wrested it unto their own destruction. Let us, nevertheless, look for truth gravely, fearlessly, and for the love of what is true. If this doctrine of æonian salvation is true and there is both Scripture and reason to support it; then we need have no fear but that it will work good and not evil. A calculating timidity, it is not really the strongest element in man's nature. We can find better stuff than this in men to which we may appeal. There may be one thing worse than to lose the hold upon men's fears which the preaching of a probation limited to the mortal life once maintained. This would be to retain in our creed a doctrine so harsh, so untrue to God's nature, that we find it impossible to preach it, and thus are driven into a silence on the whole subject of futurity which men may interpret as betraying a lack of any firm conviction of the reality of a future life at all.

There remains in the minds of many to-day just enough nervousness about the old bug-a-boo of a hopeless hell to render them unwilling to think at all on the subject. The very word is tabooed, as it certainly would not be if people really believed in an endless hell yawning by the brink of every unbelieving grave. For the peril of souls, let us hold definitely to one outlook or the other. The evangelist Finney before his conversion often found his patience tried by

the inconsistencies of those who dwelt at ease in Zion with the claims of their soul-stirring beliefs. Once when there was a presbytery, association, conference or some other ecclesiastical gathering in his town, the meeting with so many white neck-ties under smiling faces upon the streets so wore upon Finney's nerves; that coming upon a deacon whom he knew, he took him by the lapels of his coat and shook him vigorously. "You're a hypocrite!" he fiercely ejaculated. "You're a hypocrite! If I believed that a lot of the unconverted people of this town were going straight down to endless hell; I'd go howling through these streets, but that I'd save some of them."

Nowadays, people object to hearing a preacher shout; but friends, the reality of things sometimes compels it. I do believe in hell: age-lasting, soul-scathing, scorpion-stung, worm-gnawed, fire-tortured, unquenchable, non-escapable, nerve-racking, blood-curdling, dreary as doubt, rasping as rebellion, cruel as crime, sour as selfishness, livid as lust, and hideous as hate. But in the midst of that vision of hell, which else I could not bear to look upon, I see One crowned with thorns, spear-pierced, nail-scarred, the World's eternal Redeemer, saving, saving, saving as long as hell lasts, or one lost soul is left to save.

The great Swiss reformer, Zwingli, was priest at Einsiedeln when the light of the gospel broke

in upon his soul. In that place was the shrine of 'Our Lady of Einsiedeln' which had great repute for the forgiveness of sins. Over a gate of the city was inscribed, "*Hic est plena remissio omnium peccatorum*"—"Full forgiveness of all sins to be had here." And much of the revenue which supported church and priest came from the pilgrims to her shrine, not only from Switzerland, but from the whole of southern Germany. But Zwingli began to tell the pilgrims boldly, "Go back to your homes: only Jesus saves, and He saves everywhere." God give us equal boldness, with widened horizon of view, to declare the glorious truth, "Only Jesus saves, and He saves everywhere." Yes, down in hell. He is able to save unto the uttermost all who come unto God through Him. It is His very nature to be an eternal Saviour.

"Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood
 Shall never lose its power;
 Till all the ransomed church of God
 Are saved to sin no more."

This is the everlasting gospel: this is the æonian glad tidings which the angel of evangelism flying in mid heaven has to bear to the outermost rim of God's moral universe. Would anything else be an everlasting gospel? Would it be an everlasting gospel that Jesus came to save a millionth part of the immortal souls that have flitted or are to flit across the stage of earth,

and then to leave the others unsaved to their eternal fate? Would it be an everlasting gospel that Christ's saving power was to be known by a very few for eternity; and dimly felt by myriads to whom He has been little more than a name for only the average of their thirty years of mortal life, and then never felt again for complete salvation in the life beyond? Was it for this that He poured out His infinite soul unto death on Calvary? Or was it for this larger hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie promised before the times of the ages; but hath in due times made His word plain through preaching which is committed also unto me?

Paul prays for the Ephesian Christians that they being rooted and grounded in love may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the length of the love of Christ. Only love can interpret love. We know this that His love cannot be shorter than our own, and is there one here who does not still love some who, in spite of our prayers and efforts, have gone unconverted into eternity? Oh, pray on for them, pray on! Show me a verse in all God's blessed Word which forbids us to pray on! Perhaps, in God's sure plan to answer prayer, we may be the very ones who may be sent yet to save that loved and wandering soul. We may believe that this gospel of Christ's atoning love is an everlasting gospel —

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THIRD: BECAUSE IT IS A GOSPEL TO BE PREACHED THROUGHOUT THE AGES TO COME.

If men are to be saved in eternity, they are to be saved in the one only way by repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. But how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher? It has been Christ's way through ages past to show Himself to men as other men who loved their souls spoke of Him to them. He waits for our introduction. He could show Himself in a flash to all on earth, to all in hell; but the analogy of all the past shows that part of the responsibility for lost souls knowing Christ will still in eternity be upon the kindred souls who love them best. We have this treasure in earthen vessels; that the excellency of this power may be of God and not of men. It was said of a missionary who toiled long in Africa, to come back with shattered health and few sheaves won for Christ, that he had achieved character, the greatest boon of all. Do not some of us well-fed, easy-going Christians need to achieve character too? When we have done our pleasant best on earth; may not that chiefest boon come to us yet through mission work in hell? The angel flying in mid-heaven symbolizes an evangelism wide as the universe, lasting as its need. One of the speakers for the Laymen's Missionary Movement has been saying that the

great essential for the missionary pastor — the man who from his home pulpit is to set hearts aglow for the world-conquest of Christianity, is not necessarily to have his mind richly stored with up-to-date missionary information; but that what he needs most is to have the world-vision in his soul. I am wondering if what is needed above all, both by the missionary in the hugeness of his task, and by the home pastor to give his preaching the supreme thrill and fervor, the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ — if what each needs supremely is not the greater world-vision, the cosmic outlook — to have the wholeness of God's sentient universe often in his soul. The field is the *kosmos*. There is sowing and reaping for you and for me broader and longer than perhaps we yet have dreamed.

The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the universe. So we read in plain Greek. And so Charles Wesley has sung —

“My dear Redeemer and my God,
 I stake my soul on Thy Free Grace;
 Take back my interest in Thy blood,
 Unless it streamed for all the race.
 I stake my soul on this alone,
 THY BLOOD DID ONCE FOR ALL ATONE.”

Friend, have you accepted this infinite world-atoning Saviour? Can you say of this Lover of Souls in all the worlds and all the ages, “My Beloved is mine and I am His”? Has Jesus

spoken peace to your soul? Perhaps you never saw Him in all His beauty before. He is waiting, longing to save you — has waited long, is waiting still. I cannot conscientiously say that a time will ever come in all the dimness of eternity when the heart of Christ will not long to save you, if yet unsaved. It is no changeful love that you are slighting: it is no mere weak and wistful sentimentality that you are grieving. All power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth; and you are destined to be saved, if omnipotence can do it. "All that the Father giveth me will come to me," Jesus said: you are given to Him: He has bought you with His precious blood: you are coming to Him. Though it be along a dreadful, dark, long pathway of ages of wandering; in the end you are coming to Jesus. Will you not come this morning? He loves you so: in your heart of hearts you love Him too: Christ needs you, you need Christ: oh, do not lose another moment of the heaven of His love!

Have you said yes to Jesus, softly just now in your soul? Then live to tell others about Him. Begin with the one next to you, nearest to your influence, dearest to your heart. Learn the joy of winning souls to Jesus. It is the gladdest work in the world: it is the noblest work: it is the work that lasts, and the work that never tires. It is not a task which will be partial in its results, or one that will end in the least sigh of disappointment or regret; but it

will go on and on until the whole plan of infinite, world-wide, age-lasting salvation is worked out to complete success. What we have experienced of Christ's salvation here at this hour and what we may experience throughout our life is an earnest of the salvation of all. He who has saved one can save anyone. He who has cared to save one must care to save all. He is not willing that any should perish. He would have all men to be saved. *What God wills must be:*

"O Grace, into unlikeliest hearts
It is thy boast to come:
The glory of thy light to find
In darkest spots a home.

How many hearts thou might'st have had
More innocent than mine;
How many souls more worthy far
Of that sweet touch of thine!"

If there is a kindness in God's justice; there is certainly a justice in His kindness. He would not elect some and not, sooner or later, elect all. The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. He tells us Himself, through the inspired Paul; that the free gift is for all. It would not truly be free if it wasn't. It is for each, as each can be brought to wish for it. So the miracle of redemption which has now taken place in your heart and in mine; bids us go forth and use our

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touch to help Christ work that miracle in other hearts, one by one, day by day, week by week, year by year, century by century, æon by æon, till the last is saved. The important thing for which to give glory to God this morning is not that *we* are saved, but that through us others are going to be saved on to the end. This belief gives to the preaching of the gospel, in all its manifold forms of endeavor, a dignity greater than men have yet appreciated. So let us take away with us our watchword of deathless, soul-winning endeavor in the paraphrase of two familiar hymns —

Salvation! let the echo swell
The universe around;
Till all the hosts of heaven and hell
Conspire to raise the sound.

Waft it on time's rolling tide:
Jesus saves! Jesus saves!
Tell to spirits far and wide,
Jesus saves! Jesus saves!

Sing it softly through the gloom,
Where one heart for mercy craves;
Sing in triumph, o'er the tomb,
Jesus saves! Jesus saves!

Give the ages all one voice:
Jesus saves! Jesus saves!
Bid creation now rejoice:
Jesus saves! Jesus saves!

Shout salvation full and free,
Heaven's high hills, hell's deepest caves;
Sing it for eternity—
Jesus saves! Jesus saves!

III

OUR UNCHANGING JEHOVAH

“I am Jehovah, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed. From the days of your fathers ye have turned aside from mine ordinances and have not kept them: return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts.”—*Malachi iii, 6 and 7.*

The key to every riddle and problem — scientific, social, political, economic, as well as religious — is in a right conception of God. Pope sings: —

“Know well thy part, and seek not God to scan.
The proper study of mankind is man.”

But we have not even a clue to the nature, origin, and destiny of man; until we learn something of the character of the God who made man. To understand an air-ship, you must know something of the thought of a Zeppelin. Else you may be foolish enough to imagine that it flies by chance — or evolution. So Bayard Taylor has more wisely sung —

“There’s naught on earth worth knowing
Save God and thy own soul.”

Theology is not only the queen of sciences, but the foundation science. Even psychology is all a jumble of mystery until, through conscience, God is apperceived. The sage of Chelsea, refer-

ring to the dictum of Greek philosophy, “Γνωθὲ σεαυτὸν,” “Know thyself,” declares this self of ours forever unknowable. So it is, until I learn first whose child I am. We find our real self in God.

The man who believes, or believes he believes, in a God who Himself, along with His universe, is in a process of evolution has not even a fixed standard to judge men by. What is right to-day may be only half right, or wholly wrong to-morrow. Not even the trend of the world’s evolution is left within our guess. The man who thinks he reads in his Bible that God changes in His dealings with men — that God may feebly wish to save for a human life-time, and, failing that, may relentlessly seek to punish through a soul’s eternity, that His name may be Love on this side the death-line, and implacable Severity on the other; such a reader of the Bible must be puzzled by his own better instincts of fair-play and kindness, and bewildered and disturbed to find himself superior to his God.

Of course, no one does quite read his Bible so any more. This theology of a two-natured divinity never was in the Bible — taken as a whole — but it has been, in part, read into the Bible by the fearfulness of God natural to the partly renewed mind, and, in part, it has been foisted upon the Bible by that species of priest-craft which endeavors to manage men as children have been managed, by frightening them with bug-a-

boos. Translators, too, have had their responsible part. But revelation cannot be inconsistent with itself. It is not fair to the Bible to let go our clasp on any of its great essential principles in order that we may untangle some little puzzling web of difficulty about a single text or a parable. The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. It is the whole message of the whole Bible that we want. The more we search for that, the more we find it bringing conviction to our reason, acceptance to our conscience, thrill to our endeavor, and gladness to our heart.

When the Westminster divines were engaged in giving form to the principles of Reformed evangelical orthodoxy in their Longer and Shorter catechisms and their Confession of Faith, they came early to the question, "What is God?" Each hesitated to suggest an answer. Who could put the Infinite into words? Then it was proposed that they should pray for God's own answer in self-revealing love. One of the younger ministers was called upon to lead in prayer, and after a silence of some moments, he began tremblingly, "O God, Thou Spirit, infinite, eternal, unchangeable in Thy being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth,"—the prayer for the light he went on to pour forth was answered in its own beginning. When those men of God rose from their knees, it was felt by all that the word had been spoken; and the preamble

of the prayer was made their answer to the ineffable question.

God is a spirit infinite, eternal, unchangeable in His being and in His attributes, one of which is justice, another mercy, another power. We have reason for the belief, and we have Bible for it, page by page, book by book. "I am Jehovah," He declares, "I am the I AM; I change not." He who is perfect has no need to change. He could not change for the better: He could only deteriorate: if He could change, He would no longer be God. God is ever new as He develops new conditions and faces them: He seems ever new in our new appreciation of Him. To the unthinking traveler the landscape seems to slip by the coach window, to the young sailor the shore seems to move. It is we who have been moving through the centuries, to scan God at a wider angle. Your friend is new to you with each new test and expression of his friendship; yet he is the same dear friend in the very surprises which he is capable of giving you. So God expresses Himself differently, in a measure, to each generation; but the Lord Himself can as little change in His attributes as in His being. For Him to cease in any way to be just or to be merciful would be to cease to be God. Justice and mercy have long ago been likened to the two arms of God in which He clasps His world. He does not carry His universe first in

one arm, then in the other; but in each with equal and eternal clasp. God's justice begins its dealings with men here in this life: God's mercy also has its dealings with them to all eternity. We are of those who are looking to see the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

God's word is far more emphatic, and explicit, and repeated in declaring that His mercy is everlasting than that His justice cannot change. Heaven and earth shall pass, our Saviour tells us, but one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law of God until all be fulfilled; but over and over we are assured, in one phrase or another, that His mercy is forever. Our text gives us nearly the last word of the Old Testament in a changeless invitation to obdurate wanderers from God. "I am Jehovah: I change not: return unto me and I will return unto you saith the Lord of hosts." And the last word of the New Testament is the same changeless invitation of God's mercy: "The Spirit and the bride say, come, and let him that heareth say, come, and let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will let him take of the water of life freely." Have you ever taken in the breadth of God's "whosoever will"? Holy thinkers have mused over it in wonder for ages. To the infinite bounds of God's moral universe, to the farthest reach of hell's distance from His blessed service, His mercy's invitation interposes but one condition; a willingness to come. Whosoever, whoso-

ever, whosoever! Let the glad word echo, echo out, out, out, and down where the most despairing soul of all this universe cringes and shudders at its fate. Shout and call it into that far soul's dulled hearing, until it wakes with a start of rapture, crying —

“That grand word, ‘whosoever,’ just means me.”

It is recorded of God's ancient people that at the time of the dedication of Solomon's temple, when they had placed the ancient ark of the covenant within the holiest place, and when all the Levites that were singers stood ready in white robes with their cymbals, psalteries, and harps, and a hundred and twenty priests with trumpets all tuned in accord stood ready; then when they sang as with one voice and praised the Lord, saying, “For he is good, for his mercy is forever,” the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord; so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord. So God honored their confession.

They worship a changeful God who conceive of Him as just and merciful in time and only just in eternity. Such a god could not rightfully use the language of our text, “I am Jehovah, I change not: return unto me, and I will return unto you.” If this means anything at all; it is an invitation for all eternity. It is

because God is changeless in His mercifulness that we sinners are not consumed. The Lord will not cast anyone off forever; for though He cause grief for the æons of hell, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. For He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. Our Father is always glad to lay aside the rod, and give the kiss.

Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his Maker? God desires us to be forgiving: though my brother sins against me seven times a day, God would have me forgive him. What God wishes us to be, He is. We are to be merciful as He is merciful. Would that be a standard worth imitating if the movings of His mercy toward each only lasted for life's little span? Surely we will all agree that by God's essential nature, He must yearn to be merciful as He is just to all eternity. He is not willing that any should perish. Then why should they? What God feels reluctant about, how can that eternally continue to be?

This brings us to a thought of even deeper import. God is not only infinite, eternal, unchangeable in His attributes but also in His purposes. What God starts out to do, all eternity cannot alter. He could not be God, and change His mind. "The counsel of the Lord standeth forever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations." "The world," says Schleirmacher, "is one vast will, constantly rushing into life." It

is not only one vast will, but it is one vast plan. Couple infinite will with infinite intelligence and you cannot have anything else but immutable decree. Coming down through history, cropping out in the news of yesterday, we can look and see the unfoldings of one consistent purpose. Scrape away the debris of the mountain side, and there lies the ledge.

“For we doubt not through the ages one increasing purpose runs,
And the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns.”

All the lines of power that run through this universe converge toward a single point. This is that —

“One far-off, divine event
Toward which the whole creation moves.”

The details of God's vast plan, what finite intelligence can grasp? Who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counselor? None of us can soar ninety millions of miles to the sun; but standing at two points upon our planet with the distance known between, we can sight along straight lines to the sun, measure the angle of the sight lines with the base line, and compute the distance of the sun. So we can sight along the converging lines of God's world-plan, and know a little of the end from the beginning. Jesus outlines the consummation of all

things for us when He says, "Even so it is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should perish." "Other sheep I have," He declares, "which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd." Oh, see Him bringing them! The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost.

"But none of the ransomed ever knew
How deep were the waters crossed,
Or how dark was the night that the Lord passed
through,
E'er He found His sheep that was lost."

"Them also *must* I bring." Not only of earth's fold, not only the ingathering of time's searchings. Oh, the terrible journeys in hell the Saviour of the lost is taking that at last there may be one fold and one shepherd!

The doctrine of God's election, rightly understood, instead of being a discouragement to endeavor for our own and others' salvation, is the supreme assurance of ultimate universal salvation. He who from all eternity has chosen some must consistently be planning to save all, some elected for this æon, some for that; all to be saved as they freely consent to God's unswerving plan. "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of His understanding."

His mercy is forever. This gives us *first*, a key to interpretation; *second*, an incentive to faith and conduct.

Take the Bible as a whole: interpret the dark things by the light. "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." There is but one rational preconception with which to approach God's revelation of Himself both in His word and in His world, and that is that God is so complete and so perfect as to be eternally the same. His Word says, "These shall go away into æonian punishment." "Depart from me, ye cursed, into æonian fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." True; but *His mercy is forever.* Abraham in the parable says, "Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us that would come from thence." Undoubted; but *His mercy is forever.* This is our rock of infinite confidence. I will not deny or minimize one clear statement of God's eternal Word; I will endeavor to look without mental evasion into its lake of torment whose flames go up to the ages of the ages; but as I peer across its lurid vista of agonized soul-faces into that outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, where their worm dieth not and their fire is not quenched; I will still whisper to my inmost soul, *His mercy is forever!*

How this assurance strengthens faith, how it inspires conduct! You and I have nothing what-

ever to trust in for eternity but the fairness of God's everlasting mercy. We shudder at the thought of trusting our soul in the hands of a changeable or a partial God. If His mercy were for a day, a month, or a year; if it chose its favorites capriciously; we might wait tremblingly amid the glories of heaven's court until our season of favor should come to its close, and we, in our turn, might be cast aside. Scarcely less wretched would be our precarious trust in a God who left all to the haphazard choice of His creatures, who had no plan of His own by infinite suasion to bring all to His blessed will; but who left men to make utter failures of themselves, and then grew weary of caring about them, and let them drop away into nothingness. But to the Jehovah revealed to us in this blessed volume, one whose mercy and whose justice are alike changeless and eternal, how easy it is to give our quiet trust, our loyal obedience, our undying affection! We rest in love like His, and underneath are the everlasting arms. There is a love that wearies while it fascinates us — so capricious, so passionate. There have been theologians who would almost represent God's love as like that. But our God is one whose love is ever the same. It is love while it punishes just as while it pardons, and its punishment is in order to its pardon. We might harden our hearts indefinitely against a judgment which was merely punitive, and even take a certain reckless delight in daring its worst

penalty. But when we come to look upon hell itself as God's great house of correction, where He carries on through the ages the sacred task of reclaiming immortal souls from sin, and saves men 'so as by fire'; then we no longer have a motive for resisting His love, beautiful in severity, eternally yearning to save. To such a Father God as this, which of His children of men will not be willing to yield a glad obedience, and a loving service? How we will fear to displease Him, knowing that He will never give us up to an eternity in sin; but in His sweet sternness will deal with us faithfully for ultimate reclamation! Joseph Cook says, "Our God would not be a consuming fire, if He were not an enswathing kiss." God punishes to save. Looking out from a city casement, we have seen the glorious afternoon sun turn fiery red as it sank through the horizon's rim of miles of smoke. So infinite love is burning wrath, when seen through the atmosphere of sin. God is angry with the wicked every day. Yet He commendeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God. There is no refuge from those terrible hands, but in the everlasting arms of His mercy. It is not we, but our sin that hell burns to consume. Either we must weep for it, or burn for it, both here and hereafter. God cannot change; we must, until our hearts are one with Him.

IV

THE SAME JESUS

“Whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation, Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, yea and forever.”—*Hebrews xiii, 8.*

Jesus Christ yesterday: this carries us a long ways back. He says, “Before Abraham was, I AM.” In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” He is the “image of the invisible God, the first born of every creature.” “He is before all things.” Let your thoughts go back. Back to the geologic ages, when through millions of years our earth was forming, layer upon layer — Christ was there. Back to the beginnings of creation when the star systems were nebulæ; back before God said, “Let there be light” — Christ was there. Back to when there was no universe — Christ was there. He had glory with the Father before the world was. “By him God made the worlds.” “By him are all things, and we by him.” Who made you? The catechism answers, “God.” As truly it might answer, “Jesus.” “The same was in the beginning with God: all things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made.” “All things were created by him and for him, and by him all things hold to-

gether." Christ upholds all things by the word of His power.

Even in the beginning, He was a redeemer. He is the lamb slain from the foundation of the world. When God appointed the foundations of the earth, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy; then this eternal Wisdom who had been with God from the beginning, 'or ever the earth was'—even then His delights were with the sons of men. God said to Him, "Let *us* make men in *our* image." Back of the incarnation, by which Christ was found in fashion as a man, stands the creation, at which man was made in the image of Christ. We belong to each other by a double assimilation. Already He was giving Himself to us and for us. He was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. In His eternal life which has no sequences, He was already hanging on the cross of Calvary. God was laying down His life for us. In this sacrifice of the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world, Abel's sacrifice of the firstlings of his flock found its complement and its acceptance.

In the Old Testament we read frequently of the "Angel of Jehovah," appearing to men and perhaps in the next sentence, He speaks as Jehovah himself. Now we know that 'no man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him'; so, we are drawn to identify this 'angel

of Jehovah ' with Jesus. He it was who called to Abraham not to slay Isaac in sacrifice. He had the right; for His own sacrifice was already sufficient. It was He who spoke to Hagar by the fountain in the desert in the same compassionate way that was like Jesus, and Hagar called the angel, "Thou God seest me." It was He who led the children of Israel out of Egypt and who appeared to Gideon and to Manoah. David knew Him as his Lord, Job as his Redeemer, Isaiah as "Immanuel, God with us." To Haggai He was the "Desire of all nations," to Jeremiah, "The Lord our righteousness," to Zechariah, "King over all the earth," to Daniel, "Messiah the Prince." He came to Abraham sitting in his tent door, rescued Lot from Sodom, appeared to Isaiah in the temple, and was with the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace. Undoubtedly Christ is the largest figure in the Old Testament. From the promise at the gate of Eden to the coming Lord of Malachi's prophecy, he stands beside the shifting scenes of Old Testament history like an actor in the fly, with heaven's glory behind Him, casting His approaching shadow upon earth's dimly lighted stage. He is prefigured and foretold from beginning to end of the volume. He is lifted up in the brazen serpent, offered in type of sacrificial lambs, portrayed in vision, in psalm, in song, in proverb, in life-story, in emblem of sprinkled blood, of scarlet thread, of cross mark in forehead. Well might

Christ exclaim in coming into the world, "Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not; but a body hast thou prepared for me." Well might John hail him, "Behold God's Lamb that taketh away the world's sin."

And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth. In Him God was revealed reconciling the world unto Himself. His life and death were one consistent paradox of divinity shining through lowly humanity. Born in a stable; He was heralded by angels and pointed out by a star. Reared in exile and seclusion; He appeared at John's baptism and was owned from heaven. Rejected at Nazareth; He becomes the wonder worker of Galilee. Often hungry and thirsty, He could feed a multitude from a lad's lunch basket. Worn out and asleep; He rises to rebuke the winds and waves. Frequently weary with walking; He could walk upon the waves. He did not cry or strive; yet His voice could bring the dead to life. Without means to pay His poll tax; a fish of the sea yields Him tribute. Despised and rejected of men; disease and death obey Him as did the centurion's servants. Jeered at in His death; the earth quakes, and the sun puts on mourning. Executed like a criminal, He takes up life again as God. So human He was, so sympathetic, so craving of sympathy, so com-

passionate, so appreciative of the really good things of life; yet He saw Nathaniel under the fig tree, He knew where all the fish were swimming in the sea, He drove His enemies backward with a look; then died praying for them, and opening the door of Paradise to a penitent thief. So He completed His life work as a saviour should.

But no; He has been living the same life and doing the same deeds ever since. The wonderful resurrection change to the spiritual body made no difference in the heart of Christ. Eagerly He sought the company of those who loved Him, of those who talked of Him by the way. Eagerly He explained to them the purpose of His sacrificial death. He was their friend still in exaltation. Nothing could be more natural, more chummy even, than the way He called to them in the boat after their night's fishing on the sea of Galilee; "Boys, have ye any meat?" He dealt wistfully with the doubts of Thomas, the former unfaithfulness of Peter, and bound them to His heart again. And when He rose from their midst on the hill-top, He went up looking down, His hands outspread, blessing them still.

But He did not really leave them at all. "I will not leave you orphans," He had promised; "I will come to you." "A little while and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me." The history of Christianity has been a continuation of the life of Christ. The miracles of His visible life-time have been far eclipsed by the wonders

of redeeming grace which He has wrought down through the centuries, and by the miracle of a transformed world which attests His living presence and power to-day. Jesus Christ to-day is the same mighty Saviour to the millions who are trusting their all for time and for eternity to Him. *Jesus Christ to-day* is the world's great teacher. Humanity sits at His feet to learn of Him. His sayings are quoted from lip to lip. His precepts reappear in the noblest thoughts of modern men. Christendom is dotted with schools that show His influence. The isles wait for His law. More and more, across the statute books of the nations, across the ledgers of their commerce, across the code of their international relations is being written this single law of Jesus, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Of the increase of His government and peace there promises to be no end. Peace on earth, good will among men is the sublime miracle He is working under our very eyes. *Jesus Christ to-day* is the world's great king. He is king of once barbaric lands which He alone has civilized: He is king of states blessed with constitutional liberty modeled on His own magna charta of equality and brotherhood, states redeemed from the curse of chattel slavery, the cursed traffic in strong drink, the curse of sex degradation, and other strong, bad things of a day that is almost done. Pilate asked Jesus in scornful tolerance, "Art thou a king then?" and Jesus answered, "Thou sayest

that I am a king." He made His claim in symbol riding over the brow of Olivet; and that royal progress so humbly begun has wound its way down the shadowy cañons of the centuries until to-day it belts the globe with its hosannas of triumph over sin. By all the reforms for which the world still strains to the birth, Christ alone is king. He is the world's great captain, leading its millionfold conflict with wrong. He said, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." He was manifested to bring to nought the works of the devil and His age-long fight is still on. *Jesus Christ to-day* is the world's great reformer, He is also, just as of old, the world's great healer, both of body and soul. Whose are the hospitals, whose is the Red-cross League? Their spirit and motive is that of Jesus. World wide medical missions carry on Christ's work in Christ's natural way. Faith also cures to-day, as when it reached to touch the hem of His garment of old as He passed. Christ is the great practical helper of men to-day. In social service, in many types of brotherhood, in every form of benevolent activity, Christ is the great benefactor. Asylums, charities, protective associations, training schools: what had the world like these before Jesus came?

Above all, Jesus Christ to-day is the same living, personal Saviour. He is not only in this world as of yore going about doing good; but

He is in this modern world seeking to save. Overwhelming consensus of testimony proves it on every side. If you doubt; try and prove Him as your Saviour. If you seek Him really, you will find Him real. The daily miracle of answered prayer will demonstrate the divine Christ to you better than every external argument. You will *know Him* whom you have believed. Jesus will be the same friend to you as to Lazarus or Martha or Mary. He Himself will join you in your walk as He joined the two on the way to Emmaus.

“’Twas a happy, happy day in the olden time
When the Lord to Bethany came;
Open wide the door, let Him enter now;
For His love is ever the same!”

This is not mysticism: it is matter of fact, demonstrable reality, and just to know Him personally is eternal life for you and me.

Christ to-day is the same mediator between God and man. Just as He prayed for His disciples in the sacred supper chamber, as He prayed for His enemies while hanging upon the cross; so He ever liveth to make intercession for us.

“For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life:” Which life? Why the life, the eternal life He is living now. He lives to save. If Christ were not the same Saviour forever, where would cur

hope be? What else have we to trust in but the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life? If He doesn't keep on saving, we are lost.

The next volume of this world's history, and the other world's, may well have the same prologue as that of Luke's Book of Acts: "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus *began* both to do and teach." Our Lord is still only beginning. He has undertaken for the world's salvation, and eternity must be allowed Him to finish His task. *Jesus Christ forever* is not a different Jesus, but the same Jesus. You remind me that He was and is here on earth as our Saviour, but that He is coming to be our judge. Has He not been a judge then, as well as a saviour, all through the world's history? Was he not predicted as a judge? Isaiah foretells of the Branch that shall grow out of the stem of Jesse, "He shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears; but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked."

He was to come as the Lion of the tribe of Judah; His fan was to be in His hand to thoroughly purge His threshing floor. He was to reprove with equity for the meek of the earth. He was not to fail nor be discouraged till He had set judgment in the earth. History has

proved the vision. Christ has been the great judge among the nations and those that have stood for Him have prevailed. In the body long ago, He was a judge when He plaited the whip of cords and drove the money changers and venders from the temple. He was a judge when He launched upon scribe and pharisee the sevenfold, scathing lightning of His reiterated woe. He was a judge when, with aching heart, He decreed for Jerusalem, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." He was a judge when His word blasted the barren fig tree. We believe in Him as our judge. We would not love Him so much, if we did not tremble before Him. He will come to judge the quick and the dead; but He would have no right to judge, if He were not forever trying to save. Not only as long as this earth lasts will Christ continue to work in it as a teacher, a law-giver, a king, a reformer, a healer, a benefactor, a saviour and friend; but out in the wide universe, out in the long eternity we will find Him still seeking His lost sheep UNTIL He find it. Would He be the same Jesus forever, and not do that? Peter tells us that His spirit went from the lifeless body still hanging upon the cross to preach His gospel of a completed redemption to the spirits in hell's prison. Paul declares the same, "That he ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?" Paul's contemporaries located hell and hades there. The Apostles' Creed

gives us the same antithesis. "He descended into hell: He ascended into heaven."

Jesus Christ in hell. Whither else in all the universe would His heart more readily draw Him? Where else could He win such victories of redeeming grace? Where else could He so fulfil His mission of bringing to nought the works of the devil? Could He stay out of hell and accomplish that? Could He be the omnipresent God, and not be in hell? If there at all, how could He possibly content Himself, and not go seeking to save? I tell you, Christ will make this world of ours over yet — far more gloriously than He has made it over thus far — but what is infinitely more, He will surely make hell over, as truly as He is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. *Jesus Christ forever* will bear the sins and sorrows of the universe, until sin and sorrow will be no more. There is meaning and intensity in the "yea" of our text. If Christ has been the same consistent saviour yesterday and to-day; how much more will He be the same forever! He has been the same all along on earth, *yea* and He will be the same saviour in hell.

And we will be with Him there. Through infinite grace we will be permitted, we trust, to sit by His side in heaven, to work by His side in hell. We hardly know which will be more glorious. When we come up from the lurid harvest fields of hell, worn with struggle and pity, bringing our sheaves with us, precious immortal souls

snatched as brands from hell's burning, saved so as by fire; then we shall see the King in His beauty. We shall be like Him; for in hell we shall have seen Him truly as He is. We will have seen the glory of His deathless, all conquering love. So we will join, oh, how rapturously! in heaven's completed chorus of praise. And what will be its theme? "To Him who hath bought us and redeemed us with His own precious blood." We will still praise Him most of all for that. As He is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; so He will be to all eternity, in the light of heaven's wondering love, the Lamb in the midst of the throne, a lamb as it had been slain — just our own crucified Jesus: the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.

V

KNEES THAT WILL BOW

“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name that is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow of beings in heaven, and in earth, and under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.”—*Philippians ii, 9-11.*

This is a great announcement made by One who is able to bring it to pass. Among the inspired prophecies of Isaiah, God proclaims, “I have sworn by myself, the word has gone out of my mouth in righteousness and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall own me.” The inspired Paul quotes this prophecy in the epistle to the Romans, and with its brave words ringing in his soul, here in *Philippians* applies it to Christ. All will agree that God is able to bring it to pass. With one mighty sweep of the wind of the spirit He could make all hearts bow—in heaven, in earth, in hell. To the ancient mind, Sheol, Hades, Gehenna were under the supposedly plane surface of the earth. The promise of our text refers in turn to spirits beneath as well as to those above.

But God does not care to have the homage of unwilling knees. All knees eventually will bow to Jesus; because all intellects will be convinced

that He is Lord, all hearts will learn to love and trust in Him, all wills shall willingly yield to His. It is His right, and He would rather wait than have it yielded by constraint. It is as true of one as of another that we are not our own, we are bought with a price — not with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. “When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed.” God has given all to Jesus, and He says confidently, “All that the Father giveth me will come to me.”

“Secure I fold my hands and wait,
Nor care for wind, or tide, or sea;
I rail no more 'gainst time and fate;
For what is mine will come to me.

I stay my haste, I make delays;
For what avails this eager pace?
I stand amid the eternal ways,
And what is mine will know my face.

The stars come nightly to the sky,
The tidal wave unto the sea:
Nor time nor space, nor deep nor high
Can keep my own away from me.”

If you or I can rest in such confidence, how much more can the Lord of glory? Christ holds out His arms to all the world: “Come unto me!” He cries, but waits for each to come willingly. He will have no soul dragged to His

feet. There can be no real submission that isn't heart-submission. I have seen parents who seemed satisfied to have their children cower and obey: would it satisfy you? Even if all hell should bow the knee to Christ, cowering and cringing in its fear, and covering a secret hate; would that satisfy our Saviour? He has given His love: nothing but love can compensate Him in return. He could hypnotize hell into passive endurance of torment without a curse to snarl back at its judge. God could have been worshiped by a race of moral puppets all these ages, if He had cared.

I have read of a Georgia revivalist in a former day who had been appealed to during a camp meeting by a mother concerned for the salvation of her graceless son. As he preached that day, his eyes continually returned to the young man's furtive face. He leveled his long finger at him again and again. He stretched out his arms to him, as he invited penitents to the altar. He beckoned to him, while going up and down the aisles between plank benches starting sinners to the mourners' bench. Finally patience seemed to have ceased to be a virtue. The tall form of the evangelist strode in among the crowded seats. He pleaded with the young fellow clinging to his bench. Then he got him in a tender but altogether irresistible embrace, lifted him in air above the heads of those sitting around, carried him bodily to the

mourners' bench and deposited him, exclaiming, "There! you'll go through the motions anyway." When we are told that unto Jesus every knee shall bow: God does not promise merely to put all through a motion. An immortal spirit can only be said to bow the knee when its whole being freely bows. True worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. We take it that when God tells us every knee shall yet bow to our Christ, He means that they shall bow in worship. "When he bringeth the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him." And "unto the Son, he saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever." Christ's name is above every name—human names, angelic names. No name in this universe stands higher, for He and the Father are one. The same promise is here applied to Christ which in Isaiah and Romans we find applied to God. "Unto me every knee shall bow." "At the name of Jesus every knee should bow." Those who have loved Him and followed Him on earth, yet have not fully understood His divine nature; those who have taken His name in vain in careless oaths; those who from infancy have learned to hate the name of Jesus: every created being which is in heaven, and on the earth and under the earth will be falling down before the Lamb at last and saying, "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be unto Him

that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb forever and ever." They will bow the knee in equal worship to the Two who are One.

At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, not only in submission, but in allegiance. It was said of Alexander the Great that he conquered his enemies twice — first with the sword, then with the exceeding kindness of his clemency. Will the Captain of our salvation be less humane? He punishes as justice must; yet He punishes only to save. "Before I was afflicted I went astray," David admits: "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes."

"There is no God, the foolish saith,
But none, There is no sorrow;
And nature oft the cry of faith
In bitter need will borrow.
Eyes that the preacher could not school
By wayside graves are raised,
And lips cry, 'God be pitiful!'
That ne'er said, 'God be praised!'"

Friends, I believe there is no place in all this universe where God's love yearns more eagerly to mature and mellow the sweet uses of adversity than down in hell. I have asked you parents if you will any of you be content to have the slavish cowering submission of your children: I ask you now if you do not pride yourself in finding ways to win their hearty obedience, so

free, so voluntary, so ingrained in principle, and so spontaneous in love's gladdest impulses that you can trust it anywhere out of your sight? Is not God such a parent as this? Will He not find ways far different from coercion to make all knees bow? "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but in order that the wicked turn from his way and live." God punishes terribly that He may forgive eagerly, when we repent. A punished child clung sobbing to her father, even kissing his hands. "What makes you love me so after I have chastened you?" he asked. "Because I know you do it to make me good." There are those who will love much, because they have been much punished, in order that they might be much forgiven. Oh, how gratefully these will bow at the blessed nail-pierced feet at last: how they will kiss the rod which has smitten them into penitence, and the grace that has sought and found them in hell's darkest caves of sin! These are the last that shall be first—first in the wondrous story they will have to tell; first in their joy of greatest deliverance; first in their zeal; not to make amends, Christ alone can do, has done that; but in their zeal to serve freely where they have been forgiven freely, and to win other souls from sin's strange thralldom. Their allegiance will be the more hearty because it has been long delayed, and their faith in Christ will be the stronger because they have

waited so long to know Him. Think with what feeling such a redeemed one can sing at last:—

“ I am lowest of those who love Him;
 I am weakest of those who pray;
 But I come as He has bidden,
 And He will not say me, nay.

The mistakes of my life have been many,
 My spirit is sick with sin,
 And I scarce can see for weeping;
 But the Saviour will let me in.

My mistakes His free grace will cover,
 My sins He will wash away,
 And the feet that shrink and falter
 Shall walk thro' the gates of day.

I know I am weak and sinful,
 It comes to me more and more;
 But when the dear Saviour shall bid me come in,
 I'll enter the open door.”

Yes, every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess Jesus as its Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Nothing else could possibly glorify Him. Is a great king glorified by the number of his subjects in irons and in dungeons? Is he not rather glorified by the multitudes of free men praising his beneficence in righting wrong? There are prohibition towns where they take visitors first of all and with greatest pride to see the empty jail. Friends, God is

working toward an empty hell. There are no lands on this planet more forward in social and political progress than Australia and New Zealand, which came into touch with civilization as penal colonies. How God will be glorified when knees in hell begin to bow! There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth anywhere, always. How heaven must rejoice over repentant ones in hell! Are there none? Then this text is a lie. Blot it out of your Bible; for it lies. Blot out all the texts upon which we have already been reflecting in this series. Each is a lie. Take the text; "God is love": blot it out; that is a lie. A loving God could not possibly keep a hopeless hell. A friend who was superintendent of a rescue mission tells me of a night when they prayed long with a poor drunkard after the meeting. He wept and prayed for himself; but found no hope. At last, in sheer weariness, they led him from the room and as they closed the door behind them, they said to him: "You are too drunk, to-night: go home and pray and come again sober." He reeled a few yards down the pavement; then fell across the curb and broke his neck. My friend has a hopeless regret; but I say to him, "Will not such a contrite heart repent in hell and be saved?" "Him that cometh unto me," Jesus said, "I will in no wise cast out." Our Lord did not make any limitations: why should we?

The knees that do not bow to Christ on earth, will bow in hell. How do I know that? Because God's word here tells me so. Because every instinct of the believing soul, and every rational conclusion of the inquiring mind tell us so. "As I live, saith Jehovah, unto me every knee shall bow." Holland in the conclusion of his "Katrina" tells of the voices that spoke to his soul, after his prayerless life, by his wife's dying bed. The wife speaks to their weeping daughter,—

" ' Be silent, dear!

Your father kneels to pray. Make room for him,
That he may kneel beside you.'

At her words

I was endowed with apprehensions new;
And somewhere in my quickened consciousness
I felt the presence of her heavenly friends,
And knew that there were spirits in the room.
I did not doubt, nor have I doubted since,
That there were loving witnesses of all
The scenes enacted round that hallowed bed.
Ay and they spoke. Deep in the innermost
I heard the tender words, 'O! kneel, my son!'—
A sweet monition from my mother's lips.
'Kneel! kneel!' It was the echo of a throng.
'Kneel! kneel!' The gentle mandate reached my
heart

From depths of lofty space. It was the voice
Of the Good Father.

From the curtain folds
That rustled at the window, in the airs

That moved with conscious pulse to passing wings
Came the same burden 'Kneel!'

'Kneel, kneel! O! kneel!'

In tones of earnest pleading came from lips
Already pinched by death.

A hundred worlds,
Imposed upon my shoulders, had not bowed
And crushed me to my knees with surer power.
The hand that lay upon my daughter's head
Then passed to mine; but still my lips were dumb.
'Pray!' said the spirit of my mother.

'Pray!'

The word repeated came from many lips.
'Pray!' said the voice of God within my soul;
While every whisper of the living air
Echoed the low command.

'Pray! pray! O! pray!'

My dying wife entreated, while swift tears
Slid to her pillow.

Then the impulse came,
And I poured out like water all my heart."

Some day, somewhere those voices will speak
to the soul of everyone. Some day, somewhere
the stubbornest knees will bend, the hardest heart
will plead for mercy. God's word tells us so.
"That at the name of Jesus every knee should
bow." The skeptic some day will bow: his last
question answered: his last objection overborne;
and cry with doubting Thomas, "My Lord and
my God!" Some day the last persecutor's knee
will bow to ask with Saul of Tarsus, "Lord,
what wilt Thou have me to do." Last of all, even

the hypocrite will some day learn truly to pray, and beg, along with Simon Magus, that honest men will entreat God's pardon on his most sinful soul of all. Oh, look and see them, out in eternity, bowing spirits' knees to Jesus! The spirit of Cain is claiming Christ's expiatory sacrifice in place of its own futile thank offering. The spirit of Pharaoh is bowing to the King of kings. Pharisees and Sadducees, Pilate and Herod and Judas kneel. Nero and Marcus Aurelius and Julian pray. Socrates, Zoroaster and Confucius sit at the feet of Jesus. Alexander and Napoleon lay their crowns before Him. Huxley finds his soul, and Theodore Parker owns his Lord. Even Ingersoll learns reverence. Far out in hell, boldest rebellious spirits are yielding to love's absolutism, and pleading for forgiveness in the name of the Saviour who died also for them. Look! look! even demons bow the knee. Oh, wonderful redeeming love! hear each exclaiming in turn, "There's grace enough for me!" Wait — what do we see? The Father of Evil himself yields to the power of conviction of sin. His last self-deceiving argument for continued rebellion has failed him. Love in severity has robbed him of his last motive for continuance in sin. He sees himself somewhat as God sees him. Shame, contrition, yearning for forgiveness overpower him. He realizes that there is no atonement he can make. The eternity still

to be is too short for reparation. With an infinite sob, he stoops to the nail-pierced feet where alone there is pardon for such as he, for such as you, for such as I. He who once tempted Christ by the price of all the kingdoms of the world to give one bow, now bows the knee. Oh joy! oh glory! the great Enemy has yielded. The Adversary has become a convert. Saved ones stand on tip-toe; angels whisper it across the farthest reach of heaven, "Behold he prayeth!" The bitter hate of ages melts away from the blackest heart of the universe. Love waves the banner of eternal triumph on its last battlefield as Satan bows the adoring knee to Christ, crying, "Be merciful to me a sinner!"

Now the Father God is completely glorified. His love is glorified; for it has won over the last and most malignant enemy. His power is glorified; for it has subdued even the hearts of His foes. His justice is glorified; because it has provided an atonement which avails for infinite crimes. His eternal foreknowledge is glorified; because it has foreseen this all-satisfying end from the beginning. His wisdom is glorified for having conceived a plan of salvation which has proved all-embracing and has brought out the world really gladder and better than if nothing had ever gone wrong in it. God's fatherhood is glorified as never before; for the great prodigal son of God has come to himself and returned to his Father's house.

VI

THE GATES NEVER SHUT

“And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.”—*Revelation xxi, 23-25.*

So St. Peter at the closed gate is all wrong. Here we have a city with twelve gates, and all of them wide open.

It is true that Our Lord said to Peter, “I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.” But He said the same with regard to all Christian friendships as a warning against severing them lightly. Every worker for God carries keys to the kingdom of heaven. Each text of the preacher or teacher is a key. One will admit one soul, one another soul into the kingdom of heaven, which is one kingdom here and hereafter. Take that key; John iii, 16, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Take this key, John i, 12, “But as many as received him, to

them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." How many souls have entered the kingdom just by these two keys! It is your high privilege as well as mine to carry such keys and admit many a precious soul to the kingdom of heaven, knowing assuredly that those thus truly bound to Christ on earth will be bound to Him in heaven.

The more modern traditional picture of the angel in charge of the high, locked gate is equally untrue to our text. We read earlier in this chapter that the heavenly city John saw had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; but as these gates are here spoken of as never shut; we should rather think of the attendant angels as there to sound out the call of invitation to the open gates.

No man nor angel will have a right to stand over closed gates at last admitting applicants to a locked and guarded heaven. Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me." "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." Thank God! the heart of Christ is not a locked and guarded door to heaven; but one wide open to every needy soul.

And yet we are told in the closing verse of this chapter about the city: "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth." The gate stands open; yet some cannot enter. That is because the inability is in themselves.

Heaven would be horrible to the hypocrite: it would be torture to the depraved. Impurity would shrink from its light, and hate would be forever repelled by its love. How can opposite poles of free magnets be taught to approach one another? Are high walls and barred gates needed to keep them forever apart from each other?

Birds of a feather flock together. Like seeks like. The great gulf fixed between Lazarus and Dives need only be the gulf between soul and selfishness, between manhood and beasthood, between virtue and vice, between holiness and hypocrisy. When all souls stand free and bare, the law of congeniality will solve the problem of separation.

Wide open gates; but paralyzed souls cannot walk into them. There is no need of chains to hold you under the sea, when your heart is lead. Like Judas, each goes to his own place. All the craft of hell couldn't keep him from doing it. The man without the wedding garment needs little force to cast him out. With confusion of face, he will slink to the outer darkness. Hell is the covert of unwashed souls. The utmost horror of hell will be its aversion for heaven. The fascination which the flame has for the moth, which the serpent exerts upon its pray, will make sin-tortured souls prefer to be in hell. The man who leaves his cheery home, with its nestling affections, for the saloon, the gambling

den, the club, and the brothel already has his destination in eternity written upon his soul's forehead. He is infatuated with hell. Ephraim is joined to his idols. Draw him if you could into the center of heaven's innocent mirth and sweet purity. He will be homesick for hell, his father's house. Inevitably, with an unchanged heart, he will return to hell like a dog to its vomit, and as a sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

But hell, you say, is a prison house of irksomeness. So is the stock exchange to its most eager gambler. So is society's drawing-room to the blasé dilettante. Perhaps the most cruel punishment of sin is the conflict it creates in the man's will. The evil that I would not, that I do. The soul lacerates itself with its own hate—and hates the more. Without repentance for sin, to wish that we might leave hell, even with weeping and gnashing of teeth, would be only to shut ourselves further in. The damned soul that raves and struggles and curses its fate is thus the deeper damned. Many shall seek to enter in; but shall not be able. Hell has many doors all opening inward and downward: there can be only one door opening out. "I am the Door," Jesus says.

If I may put the truth as it comes to me into the form of a vision of the future world; I see the city glorious with gates, three in a side, so wide, it is as if there were no walls. To each

gate an avenue of light converges from the outermost rim of the universe, and white robed throngs press in freely, unchallenged, for each comer has a Name in his forehead. King and peasant press in side by side, having white robes and with palms in their hands. They bring the glory and honor of the nations, the constellations into it. The gates open to every quarter of God's sentient universe; for which reason there are three on a side; and yet far out and down I see a vast shadowland teeming with alien souls who have no entrance into the city. Many of these I see lifting up their eyes, being in torment, straining their vision out of the mirk to catch some vista of Paradise. Some I see striving confidently to climb thither that they may enter one of the open gates. They ask no help, they crave no pity, they seek no king's highway; but doggedly, self-confidently, even rebelliously they strive to go up each some other way. I see them approach assured of success, and then I see them suddenly blown like chaff away, away. I see them rebound as if from some invisible elastic barrier. And when I ask the giver of the vision, I am told that something within the soul of the seeker himself causes the rebound. Until that strange something within is neutralized and taken away, each may toil and climb, and strain over and over again, he may come about so near to the open pearly gate, but he can never, never hope to enter in.

Who then will enter the gates that are never shut? We find the answers near our text and they are plain to the reason of every thoughtful soul. *First*: there is entrance there for those who do the King's commandments. We read, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life and that they may enter in through the gates into the city." "Blessed are the pure in heart; for *they* shall see God." It has been well said that heaven's gates are wide enough to admit many sinners; but too narrow to admit any sin. Who enters there must leave sin behind. Heaven is character. While no man is saved by his works; each must be saved into holiness, without which no man can see the Lord. It is exactly because all real right doing is God's work in us, and not in any sense our own achievement, except as we yield ourselves, consciously or unconsciously, to the saving power of the indwelling Christ; it is exactly for this reason that we are compelled to demand of ourselves and have a right to expect in others a changed life as a proof of acceptance with God and as the condition of a reasonable hope of heaven. You say, "Did not Jesus promise heaven to the penitent thief?" Yes, but it was to one who had just shown contrition for his deeds, and an humble longing for better things. He did not promise it to him to encourage you or me in any kind of respectable thieving. Did He not refuse to con-

demn the woman taken in adultery? Yes, but He told her to go and sin no more. He doesn't wish any of us to imagine that He will condone even that adultery of the heart of which He speaks so sternly in any one of us. You'll have to quit that, sir, or stay out of heaven. "Be not deceived: God is not mocked: whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." Continuing in sin can never make grace abound. On the contrary, it will kill the grace out of your heart in spite of all manner of pious expedients. "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord," Jesus says, "and do not the things which I say?" "Many shall say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Heaven's gate knows no compromises with sin-lovers, however plausible. Heaven is for honest men.

"Poor sad humanity
Turns back with bleeding feet,
By the weary way it came,
Unto the simple thought
By the great Master taught,
And that remaineth still:
Not he that repeateth the name,
But he that doeth the will."

“If a man love me,” Jesus says, “he will keep my instruction,” and surely heaven could not be heaven to one who did not love his Saviour. What could be more self-evidently true than the chorus of the old-time revival hymn:—

“Oh you must be a lover of the Lord,
Or you can’t go to heaven when you die”?

Dear friend, do you love God? Are you trying by Christ’s help to please Him perfectly? It is worth while for you to stop and think about this a moment; because, you know, so much depends upon it.

“’Tis a point I long to know;
Oft the theme of anxious thought:
Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I His or am I not.”

You reply, “I cannot love Him in an interested way — just to gain heaven thereby.” No; a thousand times no. Love Him, because you have let Him save you. Love Him, because you cannot help it. If you can help loving God in Christ; heaven is no place for you. You would be like a cat in a strange garret. Until you have a heart to love God your Saviour, you have no heart for heaven. You will really be more comfortable elsewhere. Go on living your cold, correct life. Go on flaunting your self-made, self-satisfied, unimpeachable correctness in God’s face for a while, here if you will: I defy you

to take it into heaven and flaunt it there. You will not have on the wedding garment: your righteousness will show as filthy rags in heaven's light. You have pleased yourself with your morality all your life: you have never pleased God. You have not done the first thing He commands you. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." "Without faith it is impossible to please God": because we cannot do His will except by trusting in His great help. We may measure up to our own standard: we may possibly measure up to our neighbor's standard for us; but who can dare to think that he has measured up to God's standard;—"Be ye perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect." So we come to realize that admission to heaven's open gate belongs — *Secondly: to the blood-washed and redeemed.* Isaiah tells us, "The redeemed of the Lord shall walk there." And John, here in Revelation, is told of the great multitude before the throne, "These are they which have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

For beings of any sphere who have never known sin or defilement, heaven's gates of course, stand open wide; but for the spirit which in its whole existence has harbored one impure or rebellious thought there must be an atonement, a redemption, a washing in some fountain open

for sin and for uncleanness. One who had never heard of the all-sufficient redemption of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; might, by musing upon the majesty of God's moral law, the impossibility of making a wrong past right ourselves, readily reach the unanswerable conclusion that somewhere, some time God had provided an infinite sacrifice for sin, somewhere a divine Saviour had died that sinners might live. He might confidently explore the history of race by race, or signal questioningly from planet to planet in search of the one great atonement which a just and loving God must necessarily have provided for sinful ones, that they might be redeemed and sanctified and brought back home to His heart again. How else could He be just, and yet a justifier of those imperfect ones who diligently seek to be reconciled to Him? God cannot be God, and open heaven's gates to guilty rebels, saying simply, "Never mind about your past." "The soul that sinneth it shall die." There is no alternative except that the sinless infinite One should die in his stead.

There is no way for lost and ruined sinners like us to reach heaven's gate; but past the cross of Calvary. Consciously or unconsciously, here or hereafter, each must get under the blood, the precious blood of Christ that cleanseth from all sin. Our own amendment will not bring us to heaven's gate: our prayers and tears will

never bring us there, except as these movings toward God and goodness may unconsciously lay hold upon Christ.

“Nor alms nor deeds that I have done
Can for a single sin atone;
To Calvary alone I flee.
O God, be merciful to me!”

You say you have heard this so often. Thank your God, dear friend, that you are hearing it again; for in its offer the way to heaven's gate is pointed out again to you. Along a well kept highway many sign posts say nearly the same thing. Christ challenges you to find any other way. He is your only hope. That which compels the assent of our reason should be heard over as often as need be, until we are moved to appropriate action. Get under the blood, brother. Nothing else can wash away your sin. All the seas could not wash Lady Macbeth's little white hand. But the precious blood of Christ which cleanseth from all sin can wash the guiltiest soul white for entrance at the pearly gate.

No sin-stains in heaven: heaven is the spotless town. If we say we have no sin; we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, God through Christ is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

“We are sweeping through the gates of the New
Jerusalem,
Washed in the blood of the Lamb.”

Heaven is only for these two: those who have never sinned, and those who have been redeemed from sin. Which class will we claim as our own, and thereby feel most sure of entering heaven, most sure of feeling restfully our right to be there?

For the redeemed, who keep His commandments: under this double condition we find near our text that entrance through the open gates of heaven is eternally promised—*In the third place*: to whosoever wills to enter there. This is the crowning word of sacred revelation: this is its last inspired gleam of the vision of the hereafter. “The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

Whosoever heareth shout, shout the sound;
Send the blessed word the universe around;
Spread the glorious news wherever sin is found;
Whosoever will may come.

Whosoever will! whosoever will!
Send the proclamation over earth and hell,
'Tis the loving Father calls each wanderer home:
Whosoever will may come!

There is no time limit to this invitation: it goes from the gates that never, never will be shut: it sounds out wistfully, yearningly, ceaselessly, eternally from heaven's gates, from heaven's home, from heaven's heart;—"Come! oh, come! still come!" It echoes down the defiles of the centuries; it sounds above the clamor and the wassail of a troubled planet: it is repeated in every language and tongue; it thrills this world and this universe with its longing; it is caught from lip to lip, from soul to soul.

"Pass along the invitation, whosoever will may come."

Aye, pass it on! It is for all climes, for all ages, for the centuries that are near at hand and for the eternities that are still to come. As long as God's heart throbs in pity, as long as one lost soul lingers in outer darkness, the precious invitation will sound on. Heaven is for whosoever will. Whosoever will turn his back upon sin — on earth, in hell; whoever will cry to God for mercy; whoever will stretch his empty arms of faith toward the infinite Saviour; whosoever will believe on the only begotten Son God gave for love of His kosmos shall not perish anywhere, but shall have everlasting life. If the invitation meant less; it would not truly be a whosoever. A limited whosoever is no whosoever. God would not put out a fake invitation. To be a true 'whosoever' the invitation must be made

known as well and familiarly to one as to another. In the long run of the ages, every soul must have the gospel message as plainly as the most favored ones of earth. Each must feel the Spirit's pleading. Otherwise it is simply not a 'whosoever.' God is not mocked; neither will He mock. Omnipotent love is pressing this invitation, "Whosoever will may come." God is following men up with it and will to all eternity, until the last one comes. If you have not yet yielded to His loving invitation; yield to-day. You only make it harder for yourself — nothing is hard for God — by your delaying. If you must see hell; be sure God's love will seek you out there; but oh the loss and wretchedness meanwhile for you! Oh the endless regret to chasten heaven for you afterwards! "Turn ye! turn ye; for why will ye die?" I have endeavored to point you out the straight road to heaven's open gate down low by the cross of Calvary. If you prefer to go a terrible long way round through hell; until, with the anguish of multiplied remorse, you find yourself there low at the cross saved as by fire at last where you might find pardon and peace and abundant entrance to-day; all I can say is, You poor fool, God pity you because of the infinite debt of rejected love you are piling up for the sure reckonings of eternity.

No, you will come to-day. Now is the accepted time: now is the day of salvation: to-day

if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts. Heaven's gate stands open wide to you to-day, and oh! thank God! you are turning into the way. Now it only remains to beckon to others: let him that heareth say come. Together, hand in hand, singing the song of the redeemed, we will go sweeping in at the ever open gate. By God's help we will go out and find others in hell's shadow land and bring them in; for while there is one still left without; the call will echo through the universe, echo through the emptied caverns of perdition; YET THERE IS ROOM.

VII

THE SACREDNESS OF HELL

“These shall go away into æonian punishment; but the righteous into life æonian.”—*Matt. xxv, 46.*

Did you ever hear a preacher of the present, or of the preceding generation preach from this text? I never did. I confess I never preached from it myself before. But if you will let me use the word that Jesus used; I will try to preach from it in all faithfulness this morning; and, what is more, I expect to go on preaching from it till I die.

If we really believe it; there is no text in the Bible which commands us that it should be preached as this one does. God says, “Son of man, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thy hand.”

We wish no blood of souls upon our hands. All that deters many an earnest, faithful preacher of the gospel to-day from announcing this text is that he has no certain, frank, undoubted and undoubtable message to give men from it. He doesn't know what to say, he doesn't know what to think about it; so, perforce, he remains silent.

Our forefathers believed it, even in the literalness of its mistranslation; and preached it till the benches shook as men sat and trembled upon them. Then Christianity had power. Go into the villages and country places of our eastern states, and you will find old churches — great, barn-like structures, all one room inside, with pews close together and galleries around three sides. They were built in the days when men believed in hell. Everyone came to church then. Men were interested to know what might become of them in eternity. And they generally heard something pertinent to that subject.

It is a subject somewhat avoided in the preaching of to-day — and men go to church occasionally, when there is some especial attraction. On this theme of eternity the modern gospel trumpet gives an uncertain sound. Our ministry would be grieved to the heart to be accused of weakening the belief of men in immortality; yet this is the inevitable result of any lack of definiteness and strong conviction in our preaching with regard to the eternal destiny of souls. The present life was never so alluring in the illusion of its nearer vista than it is to-day. It was never easier to forget eternity in the interests of time. Consequently, the world has never so greatly needed a message of flaming intensity and overwhelming reasonableness with regard to the future life. Just now, when the blare of the life that now is comes so continually upon our

ears, is the time of all the ages when we most have needed a clarion note of appeal and of warning with regard to the life which is to come. To let our message on this theme which is really worth while sink, at this juncture, to an incoherent mumble, is to relax the one sure hold religion once had on the consciences of men. They do not readily take stock in dim uncertainties. "Let us live for to-day," they think; "that, at least, is real. 'Take the cash, and let the credit go.'"

It is the before and after that give life its dignity and meaning. Man's creation in the image of God; his destiny eternally to deal with God — these beliefs alone cast out what is brutish. When our preaching gets shaky about the creation and fall of man, and shady about his hereafter, we simply forestall the time when the auctioneer's notice will be tacked on the church door. An era of unspeakable graft and meanness coupled with a languid outward deference for Christianity is the natural result of vague teaching about heaven and hell. If we believe in eternal hopeless hell fire for those who have not made their peace with God in this world; in God's name let us preach it: how can we possibly help preaching it, as our grandfathers did, every chance we get? If we have any modified doctrine of hell that seems reasonable; let us reason it out for all we are worth, before men lose their interest in the whole subject of Christianity.

Nominal Christian people do not realize whither they are drifting. The practical creed we live by, as distinguished from that which we nominally profess, is fast formulating into this: that pleasant things are pleasant. "Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die." At our best, there is pleasant home life, pleasant humaneness, pleasant social service (covering hideous social injustice), pleasant play at missions, pleasant music at funerals, some flowers and a tombstone — then it's all over.

There was a time when the name of hell came from the gospel preacher's lips strident with warning, quivering with real emotion, majestic with forceful argument. To-day, it simply isn't heard at all. No, sir! hardly with ninety-nine preachers out of a hundred, or hardly from one year's end to another. The name is hardly found in polite literature of the period: it is considered out of place in conversation. It is low and coarse in its present day association. It is used, for the most part, in ribald joke or lurid profanity. Fools make a jest of hell. Blasphemers make it the bagatelle of their unintermittent oaths. So they do with the sacred name of God himself. But the name of hell is used only in this light or wicked way. Shall we let the old word go? Has it become too far debased? Has it been profaned and ridiculed past our earnest use? What other word have we for the thing? While men are jesting over it, hell itself is yawning

beneath their feet. No, we must stand for the sacredness of hell, as we do for the sacredness of God. Make hell real to men, and they will stop joking soullessly about it. Show them the real hell, and oaths will die upon their lips. We are here this morning to stand for this thesis, that hell is the most sacred place in all God's universe; first, by reason of its tremendous reality; second, by reason of the use God is making of it.

Hell is real. Look around you, if you doubt it. Look within. Sin is hell. Hate is hell. Envy is hell. Falsity is hell. Meanness is hell. Lust is hell. Selfish discontent is hell. Over-reaching your neighbor is hell. Cold-blooded indifference is hell. Cruelty is hell — cruel stabs, cruel words, cruel silence, cruel pride, cruel superiority, cruel bargains, cruel tyranny, cruel misjudgment, cruel suspicion. A bully is a bloated slice of hell.

Drink is hell. Gambling, even to its most refined disguise, is hell. Domestic unfaithfulness is hell. Living any sort of a lie is hell. Hypocrisy is hell. Doubt is hell. Bigotry is hell. Superstition is hell.

Virtue is its own reward: vice is its own penalty; but God knows how to intensify both. Sins of the flesh bring infirmities to the body, premonitory of the pains of hell. Sins of the mind warp and darken and embitter. So we stumble into deeper sin. Sin's worst penalty is the plague-culture with which it infects the

soul. It may be only a little whiter spot in the palm of a lily white hand that first shows the leprosy which will rot every fibre by and by.

The soul that sinneth, it shall die. Oh! there are so many ways they take to die! The man with tuberculosis may have it in his lungs, his nasal tubes, or in the joints of his bones. Wherever it lurks, it is death within. Wherever sin lurks, there is death in the soul.

Follow the unregenerated sinner into eternity. Grant us immortality — that is all. His hell is simply to go on being as he has been, only worse and worse. The cannon ball follows the aim of the gun. The sin-germ breeds its swarm in the soul. Always, everywhere, sin is soul-death. A young Southerner was bantering his old nurse about her beliefs. "Tell me, Auntie," he said, "where does the Lord get all the brimstone it will take for His lake of fire and brimstone? It must take a lot of brimstone for all the people in hell." "Law's, honey!" was the ready answer, "yuh don' need to trouble yo'self to ansuh dat ah question. De Lawd don' hab no trouble gittin' de brimstone. Case *you takes yo brimstone wiv yuh.*"

To doubt and deny hell would be a pleasing way to be rid of the fact; if it would avail. Every pulse-beat of the sinner's conscience assures him that he is under condemnation; and as sure as God is just he must exist until he has suffered for his sin. Hell *must* be punitive, as well as

reformatory. Otherwise God's justice would rank below human justice. Jesus did not say, "These shall go away into æonian discipline," merely; but he said, "These shall go away into æonian punishment." God will render to every man according to his works. Well might the drunken admirer of Ingersoll urge him on to disprove the existence of hell for the reason that if hell did exist a great many of his associates were plainly upon their way thither. Colonel Richardson used to tell a story which sounds rather as though it had been made or adapted to order; yet it may serve to point to truth. He and two Universalist friends were represented as arguing over the existence of a hell which his friends combatted as too horrible for belief. They were in a boat upon the Niagara river, and, absorbed in their dispute, did not realize their danger until they had drifted into the clutch of the rapids. The Universalists, so the story goes, began to cry to God for mercy, while the redoubtable Colonel seized the oars, and by supreme exertions succeeded in bringing the boat safely to land. When he upbraided his friends with the inconsistency of pleading for mercy, since they had just been arguing that all men dying — good, bad, and indifferent — woke up sanctified in heaven; they were silent for some moments, until one confessed, "Universalism is a pleasant theme for which to argue; but it won't do to go over Niagara upon." The plunge into

eternity is not safely taken upon the flattering assurance that God will in any way relieve the unrepentant soul from the necessity of reaping what it has sown. Broken law means inevitable penalty, which either the sinner or his appropriated Sin-bearer must make good. It means also inevitable chastening and discipline in time and in eternity, even for the penitent; and the great Bearer of sin and sorrow would not Himself be willing to deprive anyone of its blessed ministry. Every sin demands its tear. Anything; so we are taught to let sin alone.

Goethe says, "Nature understands no jesting." The laws of God are not in any way designed for trifling. Hell may be nearest to the one who scoffs at it. "Deacon, how far is it to hell?" demanded a half tipsy young man, mounting his horse at an inn door. The deacon reflected a moment and answered, "It is not far off. You may come to it sooner than you expect." His questioner spurred his horse forward, with a laugh. The deacon followed on his way to church; until at a turn of the road he found a circle of people standing around the rider's corpse.

How far is it to hell? It is as far as the nearest grog-shop. It is as far as to some gilded temple of whore-worship which calls itself a theatre. It is as far as to the counter or exchange where one drives an unfair bargain with his neighbor. It is as far as to the work bench

where an employee bends to his unwilling toil with bitter envy and hatred in his heart. It is as far as to the home-circle from which love has flown. It is as far as to the pulpit where a preacher of the gospel stands to mumble conventional half-beliefs, or shrinks from denouncing sin. The hell around and within makes us terribly sure of the hell below.

Hell is sacred in its reality. Can we make a jest about death in the chamber of death? Hell may have its humorous associations, as everything real and human must have; but the humor of it is not for the damned. Sometimes pity is akin to laughter as well as to love. True laughter softens the heart for pity. A hopeless hell would be a world's heartache too sad for any smile. Angels beholding it could smile no more. But a hell which does its grim work with a tender purpose and an overmastering hope may sometimes bring out a smile of amusement through heaven's tears. Hell is sacred because it is so real; but it is far more sacred because it is purposeful. Its sorrow is the aching womb of redemption's greatest joy. As sure as God's Kingdom ruleth over all; He must be using hell for the working out of His most sacred purpose. A hospital is sacred; because gruesome operations are performed there by which men and women and children are taken apart and put together for new possibilities of physical existence. A penitentiary is sacred; because there criminals are

given a chance to think on their ways in the silence, and to begin at honest industry. Many processes that are slow and painful are correspondingly beneficent. A convalescence may be too rapid for enduring results. The wound of the operation may need to be reopened again and again. Jesus says, "These shall go away into æonian punishment." God's gravest work takes æons. What matter; if eternity lies still beyond?

Men must be holden in cords of affliction; until God can show them their work, and open their ears to discipline. If it is true of earth; how much more of hell, that —

"This strange, sad world is but our Father's school!"

It is obduracy and rebellion that make hell ages long. When we see even Christian men and women, who have every spiritual privilege and blessing lavished upon their life, still in their morbid spells nursing a feeling of dejection and soreness about some phase of their lot in life, toying with the insanity of gloom, and making little perceptible progress toward the heart's ease that comes with submission; we wonder how long hell will have to last to wear out the rage of an utterly rebellious spirit in the patient embrace of God's everlasting arms. Mere sorrow cannot help or save: wrongly taken, it may embitter and warp: but sorrow has often proved God's angel

visitant sent to lead us humbly back to Christ. In the parable of Dives and Lazarus, we see that hell's affliction was already bringing Dives more earnest, and partly unselfish thoughts. A lingering illness has been a factor in many a one's conversion: what may we not hope from the reflections of hell? The "Tophet" of the Old Testament and the "Gehenna of fire" (translated "hell fire") in the New refer primarily to a place in the valley of Hinnom where refuse was burned. This incinerating process in hell cannot destroy the immortal tissue of the soul itself: it can burn away only that which is evanescent and worthless. The very word, purity, speaks of the agency of fire. Thank God for hell fire, to burn dross out of souls! Even hell itself —

"Hath no sorrow
That heaven can not heal."

Many a man, to-day has reason to thank God for a term in jail. Why not also in hell's prison? What other possible all-compensating purpose could God have in keeping His hell? A South Sea islander asked his missionary, "Why don't God kill Satan, and stop the evil?" A pertinent question, indeed! And one to which the best possible answer should be that God means to make Satan himself loathe the evil by and by and help to repair it. If God should kill Satan, or merely hold him in check; He would thus be confessing that He had made a failure of Satan.

If any created soul should utterly perish at last; God's universe would thus prove itself a failure in that one detail. All the world would turn its back upon the pitiful black hole where that life became extinct, with a shuddering loss of faith in God. But once concede the possibility of salvation in hell, and its state becomes the most interesting in all the universe. All eyes are focussed where the most thrilling rescue is being made. One word in Burns' immortal poem then becomes capable of an eager change:

“ But fare you well, auld Nickie-ben;
 O wad ye tak a thought an' men';
 Ye aiblins might — I dinna ken —
 Still hae a stake.
 I'm *thrilled* to think upo' yon den,
 E'en for your sake.”

That which makes even hell most sacred in our thoughts is the conviction for which we are finding ground in these studies of God's word, that the gospel of salvation is to be preached there. Hell's discipline may be depended upon to prepare mellowed ground; but only the vital seed of redemption's power can stir new life in any soul there. Think of hell as a mission field, as a revival field! Introduce the element of the preaching of the gospel into its dark, dark problems! I wonder that those who hitherto have mused upon the 'larger hope' seem to have never turned their thoughts upon this line of

evangelism in hell. What else can there be to present even a ray of hope? Where else can there be found a branch of healing for hell's bitter waters? The emperor Tiberius Cæsar was applied to by a prisoner to hasten the conclusion of his sentence of punishment; but he answered, "Stay, sir: you and I are not friends yet." A million æons of teeth-gnashing in hell will not make any soul at one with God. There is only one way for that: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." But "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Nothing else but this precious gospel will save on earth, throughout the universe, in hell. Oh, glorious gospel! bringing the offer of pardon to the guilty and self-condemned, bringing hope into the regions of despair, bringing the living Christ in its message of Him, He Himself, honoring His word in mighty power to save! Æonian punishment must yield to æonian redemption; else Christ were only the fraction of a saviour, and God's plan for His world only the fragment of a success. "These shall go away into æonian punishment"; go where Christ can deal with them for their reclamation, where they will grow hungry for the gospel message they slighted on earth, where Christ may reach them as there was not space to reach them all here, where the scales of prejudice will fall from their eyes, where their poor, self-stopped ears will be opened to the truth, where

the sweet uses of hell's adversity may prepare the way for the mellowed joy of penitence and pardon. There in the passing of the æons curses will soften into sighs, and sighs into tears, and tears into prayer, as the knowledge of God's truth comes in; and prayer, even in hell, will bring the keenest joy of heaven.

Friends think on hell. For two generations we have been conscientiously, timidly, weakly turning our thoughts away from the most sacred field of inquiry in God's universe. But with this mighty hope of redemption to come changing the light of all our sky, the thought of hell, with all its terrors undenied, grows tender and sacred. When your gaze shrinks from its dread realities, look into the face of your Saviour who died for all. He is able to save unto the uttermost of æonian hell. Have you put your whole trust in Him for time and for eternity? Hell yawns beneath you, unless you are safe in the arms of Jesus. After a Sunday evening meeting, a pastor of a former generation spoke to a moral and highly cultivated young woman, quoting " 'Except a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.' And if not heaven," he said, "what then? There is but one other place, and that is hell." The young lady was trusting in her morality, and went away offended. That night she dreamed that the day of judgment had come, and saw the Saviour-judge seated upon the clouds. The words, "If not born again, not

heaven; and if not heaven, hell," rang in her ears. She awoke in great terror, and began to call on God for mercy.

Friends, we are talking together heart to heart this morning, not as the passing tenants of earth, but as the inhabitants of eternity. *Æons* and ages flow around us. Vast currents suck and draw. Heaven and hell pull at every heart-beat. Only in the heart of Christ are we secure. Oh, cling to Him, cling to Him now! With the arm of His love and power about us, we can look out into the *æonian* future. We can see life, life, life before us there. Best of all, we can see a mission. "There's a work for me and a work for you." Let us live for that! Let us get in training for it: let us grow skilled in the practice of it: let us glory in the fulness of it: let us begin at it to-day. Eternity! eternity! not a blank background of misty nothingness, light above, dark below; but oh! a world of interest, teeming with variety, thrilling in its humanness, glorious in its pulsing of deathless hope!

"Eternity! Eternity!
That boundless, soundless, tideless sea,
Of mysteries the mystery,
What is eternity to me?

Infinite bliss or misery,
Woe past, woe present, woe to be;
The fulness of felicity;
These are eternity to me.

Two voices from eternity!

A voice from heaven comes down to me,
A voice from hell breaks dolefully,
Life, death, O man! are offered thee.

The abyss is moved; even wrath cries, 'Flee,'
The height expands, and love cries, 'See
What God hath here prepared for thee;
Choose thou thine own eternity!'"

Choose you this day whom ye will serve. Our service is for the æons. There is no discharge in that war, only æonian victory. Æonian life means æonian struggle for God. Age-lasting, all-satisfying! Oh, give yourself to Christ and to His service now! Choose what shall be His word to you as you enter eternity, as you stand before Him in the judgment. Shall it be, "Come ye blessed," or shall it be, "Depart ye cursed"? Shall it be inheriting the kingdom which must conquer all; or shall it be sharing the age-lasting, æonian fire prepared for the devil and his angels? This is a sacred moment for us: sacred for its outlook upon heaven and hell, sacred for its opportunity to choose for eternity, sacred for its vow and prayer which each heart can hear the other whisper to the listening heart of Christ that we may be His forever more.

VIII

FIRST-FRUITS OF THE HARVEST

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures.”—*James i, 18.*

It is thrilling to remember how small a circle James was addressing when he wrote this keen letter to Christian believers among the Jews of the Dispersion, making this sweeping claim for them that, few as they were, they constituted the first-fruits of an infinite harvest — even of God’s whole intelligent creation. The first-fruits represent the harvest: they also give the promise of the harvest. Here were a few thousand believers in Christ widely scattered through the roaring heathen world which was indifferent, hostile, darkly prejudiced, intolerant, almost utterly irrational, and seemingly beyond all persuasion. The odds were a thousand to one that the new faith would be choked, annihilated, trodden under foot in its birth. Yet the apostle looking abroad upon this thin dotting of Jewish believers upon the vast map of humanity, dares to call them a kind of first-fruits of God’s creatures. That was because he believed with the vision of inspiration in the unswerving purpose of God, in whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. He who,

of His own infinite will had begotten the first-fruits could and would also beget all the others to form his complete soul-flock, soul-harvest. The miracle of one soul born again leaves the new birth of all the others an easy matter of detail.

The firstling represents the flock, the first-fruits represent the harvest. It was because Jehovah's rightful claim extended to all a man's increase, that he was to make his acknowledgment of this rightful claim by honoring God with the first-fruits of all his increase. Paul says, "If the first-fruits are holy; the lump also is holy." The first sheaf of the harvest, the first spring lamb of the flock, also the first-born of his household were sacred to Jehovah; simply because these stood for all the others. So God's first-born Son stood for us all in the infinite sacrifice of Calvary. And so these early Jewish Christians to whom James wrote, the first converts to Christ both at Jerusalem and in each city of the outer world — because the gospel in each was first proclaimed in the synagogue — these as a sort of first-fruits of God's great coming family of believers in Jesus, represented and stood for all the others. They were doubly sacred and precious because they were so few. The experts of our agricultural department in their development of a new variety of wheat of larger grains and heavier heads, or one capable of ripening during a short northern summer, will first pro-

duce a few grains, or a cup full. Every grain of this seed is worth many times its weight in gold. Years of thought and care and outlay have gone into producing it. The waving harvests of the future are bound up in it. So with the prize tulip, the latest perfection of carnation. Thousands of dollars are required to buy them: they are first-fruits, and they are precious.

The first-fruits also give the promise of the harvest. The same sunshine which has ripened the earliest yellowing ear will ripen the million others. The weak birth-cry of the first little lamb of spring tells of the bleatings of the doubled flock a few weeks later. It sounds the clarion of fecundity. So Eve's first baby came as the first tiny drop of that infinite stream of human lives which has flowed through this world of ours. When the Israelites came into their promised land, when they had conquered it and laid aside their weapons and plowed and sowed, and were about to reap their first harvest, they were to bring each the first-fruits of his first crop, the first cluster of his first vintage, as especially holy to Jehovah. This was all carefully enjoined upon them through Moses away back in the wilderness. The reason was that their first harvest and vintage and fruit-gathering in Canaan was to be Jehovah's sure promise to them of fruitful years and centuries to come.

And now when James dares to call these souls early won to Christ a sort of first-fruits of God's

creatures, how else can we interpret the plain meaning of his figure of speech but that these first newborn souls not only represented; but also gave the promise of the complete and universal ingathering of all God's created souls? What else can his words mean? If all are not to be gathered in; how could these be called, without limitation, the first-fruits of God's creatures? He would have called them simply the first-fruits of God's increase, the first-fruits of those whom God had predestinated to be gathered in, the first-fruits of God's limited harvest. But he sweeps away all these narrower forecasts, and calls them simply a first-fruits of God's created beings. If he meant anything less than universal ultimate salvation; then his language, to say the least of it, is misleading.

When Paul calls the risen Christ the first-fruits of them that slept, he meant it as inclusive for all. He mentions especially in the context those that are Christ's who will live with their risen Lord; but also teaches that all are to live again and receive according to the deeds done in the body. "As in Adam all die; so in Christ shall all be made alive." Undoubtedly this applies to death of body and soul. It promises both immortality and reclamation for all. In Adam all became mortal and sinful. Sin came, and death by sin, and reigned over all. God had on His hands a world full of dying, perishing souls; for the soul that sinneth, it must die. The offence came by one,

Harvest days are often the longest days of the year. God's harvest day of souls is age-lasting. Aye, give Him time! What a harvest has been gathered since James recognized the first-fruits! What has been gathered for God from the fields of time only proves the harvest sure from the fields of eternity. Suppose the gospel had been carried to China in its purity and power one thousand years ago. Humanly speaking, any one of our mission boards could figure out the probabilities of millions upon millions who would have thus been won for Christ in this world, and who should by every deduction and induction of sane reasoning be just as amenable, or even more amenable to influence toward Christ in the spirit world to which they have flitted without the precious knowledge of their Saviour. God pity us for letting them die in their ignorance and sin: God nerve us for the inevitable reparation of tenfold more eager seeking for their lost souls in hell! The harvest lost here *must* be reaped hereafter. God will not be balked of His harvest. The fact that this harvesting work for God could have been done so easily, should have been done, wasn't done, only proves that it will be done—easy or hard—hereafter. Every century lost only makes the harvest haste more pressing.

But you say Jesus speaks of a harvest at the end of the world (better, at the end of the æon) in which souls that are tares shall be bound in

bundles to be burned. So they will be destroyed with unquenchable fire, and that will be the end of them. If it is the end of them; then a good many exceeding great and precious promises of God's Word that cannot lie will have come to nothing. After judgment comes salvation. It is so in this world. He that believeth not is condemned already. When he comes to believe on the name of the only-begotten Son of God, he is saved: the condemnation is all taken away. That is so here, and hereafter. Always, everywhere, whosoever will may come. There are three harvests: the harvest of death, the harvest of judgment, the harvest of salvation. James clearly suggests that this last harvest will be complete. And we read in Revelation how after the Lamb stood on the Mount Sion, and with Him the hundred and forty and four thousand sealed ones, twelve thousand from each of the symbolic twelve tribes of Israel, and besides these came the voice of multitudes, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder, the voice of harpers harping with their harps; after these redeemed ones from among men are recognized in the vision as the first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb; then, after all this, John saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven having the everlasting gospel to proclaim to all. When heaven's harvest of salvation has all been gathered in from earth, these will still be only the first-fruits of universal, æonian salvation. Oh, the prophetic joy of the full har-

vest when the first-fruits are gathered in! In the orient to this day when travelers are passing along some highway past a field of grain yellowing to the sickle, they may see a husbandman looking over his field, see him pick a head of wheat or two somewhat riper than the rest and behold him running to meet them with every demonstration of joy, leaping and gesticulating until he comes, to show them his first-fruits as a trophy of the reward of patient labor yet to be harvested. So Judson after six years of incredible patience of toil and suffering in Burmah rejoiced over his first soul won to Christ, the first-fruits of what now counts up into the millions of glorious soul harvest.

Aye, give God time: the reaping is too great for the little average lifetime of ephemeral mortals here on earth. It is too great for the little fleeting years and centuries of hurried history on this planet. Its fields are wider than earth. Its harvest day is more lasting than time. Its laborers are few here; but they are many yonder.

God's harvest truly is plenteous. With what different feelings now will we bend to it as laborers in his harvest! If you came in here this morning an enthusiastic worker for God, I expect you to go out tenfold more eager, and confident, and enthusiastic. It is such a long harvest, such a vast harvest, such a sure harvest! How else could you have any heart or hope in it; if you didn't believe that? There was a time when I

tried to approach men for God; but I did it fur-
tively and with a failing heart. I looked into
each man's eyes to see if I could see there a gleam
of inward light, a capability of laying hold on
God and heaven; yet dreading to find there a
soul's face set toward hell. I wondered of each
which would prove true wheat in God's great
granary, and which would be only chaff for the
winds of perdition to drive away, away. I did
try to save men, and rejoiced in one and another
drawn from the stream which was so obviously
setting away from God. But the opportunity
for rescue work seemed so brief, the stream of
drifting lives so wide, so swift, so resistless in its
flow! Men were so much more prone to believe
a lie than to believe the truth. They were so
resentful of good influence, so flexible to evil
influence, here to-day, gone to-morrow, frail, fleet-
ing; yet determined never to admit their own
mortality, to think on their end, to turn and not
die. I stood in God's harvest field nerveless at
the hopeless hugeness of its task, grieved to the
heart over its millionfold waste of lives, nervous
over lost opportunities of soul-winning, and para-
lyzed in the dread of making blunders worse than
negligence in their effect upon the eternal fate of
souls. But to-day I look upon each man or
woman as a part of God's great sheaf and God's
sure harvest. Somewhere, somehow each will be
bound in the bundle of life at last. If I try and
fail of saving him, some one else, under God, will

surely try and succeed. I have no responsibility but to keep cheerily on trying by all means to save some. By God's help, I am in this line for some ages to come; and I cannot afford to be despondent or hysterical about it. I cannot do my best at it, except with a bounding heart. Thank God! my heart has reason to bound and to exult. If I could find any reason to believe that the comparatively meager results to be achieved in this life were all the harvest; I would grow sick with the discouragement. The scythe of death works faster than our evangelistic sickle. But oh! the true harvest is not death's but God's. Sometimes in the pressure of harvesting haste part of the work is done by moonlight. The husbandmen begin at midnight, or work until midnight, by the light of the harvest moon. Friends! God's moonlight soul-harvesting is done here on earth. We grope somewhat, and gather the precious sheaves as best we may. But death will bring the sunrise of God's æonian harvest day. Then we will see as we are seen, and know as we are known, and meet heart to heart the loved ones we have failed to win to Jesus here. No restrictions of the flesh will hamper us: it will be harvest time; tireless, sleepless, eager, glorious, till the last sheaf is gathered in.

"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." Get your sheaves for God, brother, sister, where and

when you may. It is God's greatest work for us in any world. Up from the harvest fields of earth, up from the harvest fields of hell,—

“We will come rejoicing,
Bringing in the sheaves.”

Let us fill our arms with sheaves here, gleaning the handfuls where we may. We would come up at last to the threshold of heaven's safe granary, not empty handed, having no sheaves to lay at Jesus' nail-pierced feet; but with full hearts, full arms, tired, but oh! so happy, bringing our sheaves with us. However, let us not imagine that this much will content us for eternity. These will be only the first-fruits: the harvest, in its completeness, will be still before us. Renewed in strength and energy, invigorated with immortality, we will bend to the ripening grain of God's infinite world-field. Filling heaven will be our dearest heaven. Without haste, without rest; out into the highways, out into the byways — out upon perdition's hottest harvest field; then back again with precious sheaves to shout the glory of heaven's eternal harvest home. Oh, the song of the reaper! oh, the joy of the saved ones! No soul to blast and rot forever! but sheaves, precious sheaves, each soul worth a universe, won with toil, won with difficulty, won by battling for them, but won by faith in the mighty will of God, who begat us and will of His own resistless will beget each dead soul into new life;

until the first fruits of His creatures prove their promise of the universal harvest.

Is there one soul here which has not yet yielded itself into the arms of Jesus? Yield yourself to Him to-day, as you face eternity. He will not give you up; we will not give you up; sooner or later you will choose Christ and heaven. Every day's delay makes your case more difficult (not impossible) for Him, more difficult for His workers, more tedious for yourself. God help you, dear one, give yourself to Jesus now; be part of the first-fruits; get to work to bring others; have your rightful share in the glory of the harvest.

IX

THE GREAT COMMISSION

“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature: and lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”—*Mark xvi, 15; Matt. xxviii, 20.*

This composite text, familiarly quoted, has been very often called the Great Commission. There is nothing in the least degree original in my thus announcing the subject of my text; only I wonder how many of the hundreds of thousands who have preached upon it may have realized how great the commission is, or how lasting its promise. In giving this commission and promise our Lord uses the very biggest words He could find in human language. He does not use the word, *οἰκουμένη*, ‘inhabited earth’; but He says “Go ye into all the *Kosmos*, and preach the gospel to every created being.” It is true that in His whole utterance at this time He tells the disciples to go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the triune, equal Names. The commission to mortal men was primarily to evangelize this earth. I would be the last to deny that. He also said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” Christ does not say for how long the unbeliever shall be “damned” or condemned. He doesn’t say it here, and He doesn’t say it anywhere else.

And the promise attached to the commission reads clearly in the Greek, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the consummation of the age." What age? what æon? Why the age or æon of evangelism, of course; and Jesus intimates that that is "alway."

Let me, then, put forward the thesis that we have in this text a universal commission, coupled with an age-lasting promise.

The commission is universal: "Go ye into all the universe, and preach the gospel to every created being." It has been fitly inferred that we have enfolded in this text a claim to the universality of Christianity and its fitness to all. When Bishop Thoburn went to India, he was encouraged by the comment, "You might as well try to make a Christian out of that pillar as out of the natives here." At the end of 40 years, 300,000 Christian converts could be counted in India. The Gospel of Jesus Christ has proven itself as well adapted to the Hindoo as to any of his Aryan cousins or Brahmanical, Buddhistic, or Mahomedan co-religionists. It suits every race and every mental temperament. It meets the need of the groping, sin-burdened soul from Madagascar to Labrador, from Alaska back around to Japan. None but the most ignorant would quibble any longer upon that point. In the course of generations, *some* things get *proved*.

If all men here; why not all men hereafter; why not all intelligent beings everywhere —

Martians or demons? All come literally within the scope of the commission — preach the gospel to every created being. A clergyman asked the Duke of Wellington, for information, if he really thought the gospel could profitably be carried to the heathen. “Look to your marching orders, sir,” was the characteristic reply: “‘Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.’” Perhaps the time has come for us to look again to our marching orders, that we may be encouraged by a wider view of our intended campaign. A mission to hell? You shrink in horror from the thought. But wait; an artillery officer had his men endeavoring to drag their guns to a certain hill-top. The wheels stuck: they strained in vain and cried, “Captain, it can’t be done!” “Men, it can!” was the reply: “I have the order in my pocket.” There can be no stronger argument when omniscience has given an order, or commission. Let us look again this morning and see what commission this great missionary Church of our Lord Jesus Christ has, perhaps unconsciously, in its pocket. Paul, in the doxology following his finest prayer exclaims, “Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, unto the ages of ages, amen.” The church has a mission of some sort for the ages of the ages yet to come,

and omnipotence stands back of that mission and commission.

So far as I know, I am alone in advancing as a theological tenet a belief in evangelism in hell. If I haven't scripture for it; what do the words of our text mean? Our Lord might so easily have given us a qualified commission; but this has not one limitation. It is universal, and it is without exception. On the face of it, it takes in the humblest, the lowest, the most ignorant, the most animal, the most demoniacal. It takes in earth and hell. It declares none of God's created beings hopeless. It points the unerring finger for you and me, when we are through with the mission fields of earth, and orders, "Go, go!"—*down there*—and save!"

Our Lord Himself has set the example of evangelism in hell. He doesn't ask you or me to go where He hasn't gone Himself, where Paul and Peter and the Apostles' Creed agree that He has gone, where He hasn't been, from the beginning in His essential character of a Saviour as well as of a judge, where He will not go with us and be with us alway even unto the consummation of hell's æon and to the winding up of its existence. What possibly could be a more reasonable thing for Jesus to do than to evangelize hell? Where could He find more souls to save? Where could there be manifested more gloriously His infinite power to save?

The terrestrial mission field needs the infernal

mission field to complete its conquests. The work begun on earth must be finished — if finished anywhere — finished in hell. We grasp at drowning souls here, and save a comparative few. Hell is the resuscitation ground of drowned souls. If this is not true; then the vast majority of our race have been hopelessly doomed. Under the eye and hand of an all-foreseeing, omnipotent God, who alone decrees, and plans, and brings to pass whatsoever comes to pass, a million to one of His creatures have been created to be forever damned. Can you believe it? Then, there is no other alternative but to look forward to salvation in hell. God has elected some to be saved from hell, and the remainder to be saved out of hell; and in it all His infinite wisdom and love will be vindicated in the end. All's well that ends well. All cannot be well; if part ends ill. Ask any one of our foreign missionaries who has stood amid the blight and ruin of paganism, and strained to heave a tiny section of its awful lethargy an inch nearer to the truth in Christ Jesus — ask what it has been which has nerved him for the supreme endurance of his mighty task. If he is of the more outspoken type, he will tell you it is the hope that somewhere, somehow, those millions dying around him in that far, dark land without a conscious knowledge of their only Saviour, may yet have a chance truly to know Him whom to know is life eternal. He will say,

“If I didn’t believe this; I couldn’t stand what I have seen.”

We can give our lives to missions; we can pour our millions into missions; if you will only give us breath of hope. If in Siam, or Persia, or New England, or any land of most obdurate misbelief, or unbelief, we could part the veil of obscurity that hides the future and know definitely that the cause of God’s truth, the rose of Sharon, was destined to wither and die there; that some day the last discouraged herald of the gospel would have to be recalled, and the inhabitants left to their insensate paganism; would not the hearts of workers there faint and fail at the prospect, would not contributions and legacies fail of flowing in that direction, would not bright, intelligent young lives cease to be offered for that field? All that keeps the whole cause of missions alive for an hour is the hope of ultimate world-conquest. Thank God! we are encouraged by His inerrant word, we are encouraged by the ground already gained against infinite odds to believe that His work will go on. But what after all is the true mission of missions? Is it to spread the name of Christendom over the map? Is it not rather and supremely to save perishing immortal souls? Each soul lost is a failure that never can be repaired on earth, a regret that no success with others can remove. If missions for this world were all, and were to become completely successful; still we

would have a redeemed humanity standing broken hearted, wringing its hands above the corpse of a slaughtered race. The work of missions would be done, and yet forever, hopelessly not done and never to be done. The universe would be saddened by an eternal regret. Hell would still be triumphant; heaven would be in tears.

Friends! we are not giving our lives, our prayers, our treasures to a doomed cause like that. Our divine commission is not such a mockery. Glory to God! the work begun here, will go on and on. You say the commission itself contains a limitation. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." Yes, that is true here as well as hereafter. He that believeth not is condemned already. In the Greek it is the same word. Our cry is not, "Believe, or be damned." Our cry is, "Believe; for you are damned." Without Christ, you are already lost in sin. Now, that is a cry that suits hell. "Believe! for you are damned." And Christ is the only Saviour of those who are lost, who are damned. They are damned because they do not believe; but more universally true than that, they are damned until they do believe. Always everywhere repentance and faith end condemnation. The worst damnation of all is a damnation *into* unbelief. When God sends men strong delusion, that they should believe a lie! There are millions in this world and in the lower world who

would rather believe a lie, than believe the truth. Any old lie! Mohammedanism, Romanism, Mormonism, Spiritualism, Agnosticism, Christian Science, New Thought, Theosophy — anything, so it is palpably not the truth! Hell itself could hardly be more besotted with fads, than this second decade of the Twentieth Century. But oh, thank God! there is something more lasting than fads. Back again, after its snake dance with poisonous error, comes poor, stricken, heart-weary, unsatisfied humanity to the One who alone can say, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." No soul can stay damned; for no soul can bear forever its unremitting loneliness for the Christ, its unappeasable homesickness for heaven. "Thou hast made our hearts after Thee," Augustine exclaims; "and they never rest until they rest in Thee."

Nothing could be more hopeful than our endeavor. The innermost yearning of every created being is with it. Even Satan's heart is pining for it. The most insensate madman of superstition, and doubt, and sin in all God's universe some day will give over torturing himself to hold out longer against love.

He that believeth and is baptized — with water and the spirit here, with the same quickening spirit hereafter — shall be saved. Those who do not find space for repentance on earth; though they seek it carefully and with tears, as they grope from one misconception of God to an-

other; will surely seek and find it hereafter. They stray; but "toward a star."

Does it not give the gospel a new power for you, dear unconverted friend, to realize that it is for every creature? Perhaps you have been kept from accepting it, as yet; because you have regarded it as a somewhat narrow and limited offer, a sort of snap proposition, the very brevity of whose chance made you hesitate and turn suspicious. This morning the gospel appeal comes to you; if the truth is with us; as an eternally standing offer, yet coupled with solemn warning of danger and loss in delaying to accept it. He that believeth not shall be damned. Will you accept it to-day under this bright blue sky of earth, or do you prefer to wait and have the offer seek you out, ages hence, among the dark and gloomy caverns of the damned? If you accept the gospel now; you can have an honorable part to perform under its commission. Perhaps you feel that you cannot do much to aid the cause of the gospel in what remains to you of hurried, toilsome earthly life; but, friends, we will have eternity for the work of the gospel. What we can do for Christ and the gospel here, is little more than training for the wider, freer work beyond. This world is God's vineyard, but His training vineyard mainly. The eleventh hour men may each well receive his day's wage, which is mainly, after all, the reward of living on to work unhampered for

God in the boundless vintage of eternity. The victor in Spartan games had this for his most glorious distinction and reward, that he was privileged to stand in the forefront of future battles for his country. Promotion is the supreme reward—to be foreman where you were laborer; to take charge of a department in which you were a clerk; to be called to a larger pastorate, with graver responsibilities, multiplied opportunities of service; from police-commissioner to governor, vice-president, president. So it is in heaven. He that has been faithful in a few things shall be made ruler over many things. The man who gained two talents for his master shall have two cities to care for. The faithful worker in church or mission shall have a wider mission to lost souls beyond. I said the mission field of earth needs the mission field of hell to complete its conquests. I can also claim that this infernal mission field is needed to employ the trained faculties of earth's workers. The man whose health has failed under a foreign climate, and all his remaining life here must be a wistfulness for the glorious service interrupted; the man who has met quick martyrdom in Christ's service, either by disease or violent death; these shall not go to spend eternity in an unavailing sigh for the usefulness they have missed here; but when they are called up higher they will find promotion to a work so wide and sweet and glad for God, that earth's retrospect will have

in it no unavailing regret. They will have souls for their hire: souls to win in eternity. I am thinking of a friend who helped me in boyhood as only a young man can help a boy. He would gladly have been a minister of the gospel; only his eyes gave out from love of study. Sandford, old friend, you will be a preacher in glory. We will all be preachers there. Heaven has no laity, as Christ's church here rightfully has no laity; and there we shall sing our praises unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, who was slain and has redeemed us to God by His blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; that we may be priests of God and of Christ a thousand years; unto whom be glory and dominion forever and ever. A mission to hell? Heaven will be aching for it, tingling for it, exulting in it; until, one by one, its vast revival field shall have yielded up its precious, priceless, penitents; and the joy-bells of heaven ring their final peal over the last hard heart of hell in tears.

And going out upon this glorious æonian mission quest of souls, we have the promise of such companionship as will make heaven for us anywhere. "Go ye into all the *kosmos*," He commands, "and preach the gospel to every created being; and lo, I am with you all the days even unto the *synteleia*, the winding up together of the

age. All lines and curves in the history of this universe converge — some of them from almost infinite distances — toward a far-off focus, a consummation, a *synteleia*. This is the one far-off, divine event toward which the whole creation moves. Not only do the planets of our solar system circle each in its ellipse around the sun; but the sun itself, with its whole system of worlds, circles onward, together with other suns and all their unseen worlds, around some center which our finite figuring cannot locate.

“We sleep, we wake, we sleep; but all things move;
The sun flies forward to his brother sun,
The round earth follows, wheeled in her ellipse,
And human things, returning on themselves,
Move onward, leading up the golden year.”

The shadows of earth's sunsets point toward the sun-rise. As sure as facts cannot lie, a million prophetic fingers point our progress forward toward the *synteleia*. There will be a restoration of all things. “The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now, waiting for the adoption, the redemption.”

You and I have our part in the *synteleia*. Out of the poor little blundering half-failures of our little lives God is summing up the splendid total of His perfect success. Every day we are building better than we know; for there is a Master Builder with us suggesting the details;

but He alone knows the whole plan. Worker for God, what is it makes your heart kindle with a sudden happiness when you have overcome embarrassment and false tact to speak out bravely for your Master? What is it that brings the little burst of song in your heart, as you come from the house of mourning where you have wept with those that weep? What is it makes life seem so rich as you walk home tired after putting your whole heart and brain into teaching your Sabbath school class? Why, it is just Jesus keeping his promise! It is the "go" followed by the "lo"! "Lo, I am with you all the days." The expression is Hebraic, thinly veiled in Greek words. It takes us back in memory to Moses, shrinking at the thought of standing before Pharaoh to demand the release of the captives, and God answering him out of the fiery bush, "Certainly, I will be with thee." It takes us back to Jehovah's encouragement of Joshua. "As I was with Moses, I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Be strong and of good courage." It is a promise which takes in moment by moment. It is a promise which has availed through all the days of earth's history for millions who have trusted in it. In cities of heathenism, in opposing synagogues, in noisome prisons, in the arena of martyrdom, in leper cells, before judgment seats, the Inquisition, on the rack, in the galleys, upon grim battlefields, in pathless woods of banishment, how the glorious

promise has been fulfilled to each —“ I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.”

“ Lo, I am with you all the days ”: it is our Saviour’s promise, unconditioned by time or space, conditioned only by our willingness to go where He sends us. In it is wrapped His tacit claim to divine omnipresence. He could not have made such a promise, if He had not been God. Christ is everywhere always. So long as we are moving under His great commission to preach His gospel, He will be with us in Worcester, in China, or in hell. All the days, all the years, all the æons. Is not that enough for us?

Anywhere with Jesus I can safely go,
Anywhere He leads me in the world below.
Anywhere, without Him, dearest joys would fade:
Anywhere with Jesus I am not afraid.

Anywhere! anywhere! Fear I cannot know.
Anywhere with Jesus I can safely go.

Anywhere with Jesus I am not alone;
While hell’s skies are darkening, He is still my
own.
Though His hand may lead me through perdition’s
ways;
Anywhere with Jesus is a house of praise.

Anywhere that Jesus has His souls to win,
Precious souls to rescue from the doom of sin,
Heaven will be round me, wheresoe’er I roam.
Anywhere with Jesus will be home, sweet home.

X

THE COMPLETED CHORUS

“And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever.”—*Revelation v, 9 and 13.*

The history of God's *kosmos* is an oratorio of ever-increasing wonder. First we hear the anthem of creation; next, the permitted discord of evil; then, the resolved harmony of redemption. Nature, sin, and grace are vocal. The march of progress is rhythmic in its beat. Each life has its part. From echo-music of the spheres, and still small voice of mystery, to grand crescendo of full achievement; a unity in the piece has been, and is yet to be revealed that lifts the soul to awe and rapture. The inner theme is ever present, the *leit motif* bears out its promise, and the glory of the full chorus is prophesied throughout.

When God laid the foundations of the earth, the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. That was in spite of all they foresaw. “And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very

good." With telescope, and microscope, and many an aid to comprehension, we are still looking to see more and more of what God sees in His creation; and thus the wonder and the glory of it grow upon us from year to year. The whole earth is full of His glory. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. Their vibrant musical chord is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. Every part of the million-fold song of nature has its meaning for him who has an ear to hear. The little stream running from the spring under the hill has a song for those who stop to hear; an endless, crooning roundelay, first a whisper and then a gurgle, something like this: —

“ Listen, listen !

God is love !

I came up out of the deep Heart of love,

Listen ! listen ! listen !

God is love.”

So the sucking of the thirsty meadow drinking in the rain, the purling of the river, the roll of the surf, the roar of the waterfall, the whisper of the wind through the pines, the reverberation of thunder, even the shrieking of the gale moving in its vast, beneficent purpose, all sing of God's majesty and goodness. He is thus interpreting Himself to us in audible tones.

“No mere machine is Nature,
Wound up and left to play;
No wind-harp swept at random
By airs that idly stray.

A spirit sways the music,
A hand is on the chords;
O bow thy head and listen!
That hand — it is the Lord's.”

It is not necessary for each member of an orchestra or chorus to fully comprehend all that the composer of the piece had in mind, or even all the leader grasps of the composer's thought. It is sufficient, in the main, that each expresses his own part as directed. So with the vast anthem of nature; the marvel of its unity is all the work of one Master-mind. Each detail of creation fits in with its wholeness in splendid, spontaneous harmony. At least we can say that the universe as a whole shows sufficient grandeur and finish to convince any candid mind that the details of it which seem to us to be imperfections are intended for some purpose yet to be understood. The mind which could plan one solar system is not likely to be accused of oversights. Some hesitating notes in the prelude are for a fine realistic purpose, to be better appreciated later on. Frankly, the anthem of creation — especially the creation of man — is one full of mystery. Its charm and genuineness are largely in the mystery. If we found no mystery; we

might well doubt the infinitude of its composer. How God fashioned man from the materials of the earth and prepared his body for the in-breathed soul, Genesis does not tell, neither do *we* know. The straight evolutionary hypothesis is disproved by the reason of things; because to create a race by evolution would be unspeakably cruel and immoral. It is disproved by the facts of the case; because such an evolution of man from lower animal forms would have littered the earth with remains of brute men. Instead of one or two debatable skulls, we would have millions of specimens of these missing links. Nature has yet to afford an example of the gradual evolution of one species from another. The most advanced type of evolutionists teach an evolution by jumps, or sudden and accidental changes from one type to another. Presided over by Intelligence, this would be the most satisfactory kind of creation. This would also explain and provide for the acknowledged fact of the unity of our race. Out from the womb of animal nature a single pair, majestically distinct: the gateway from which they came forever closed: two perfect human bodies infused with innocent reasoning souls. Hearts of reverence looking out upon a world of wonder, and recognizing their Creator on every hand. The cap-stone of earth's creation put in place! If the morning stars sang together when earth's foundation was laid; think what ecstasy of jubi-

lation thus greeted its completed mission. Think how the sons of God must now have shouted again for joy. How the angels must have loved them: these two new, beautiful beings, made inwardly in the image of God! See them standing hand in hand, lifting their faces to the sky, unmarred by a blemish of imperfection, unstained by a thought of sin! You say it is a fanciful picture: why then do all the facts of accredited history point back to that picture? Take it, say, from the year 500 B. C. backwards. Instead of descending from comparative civilization backwards toward cave dwellers and stone hatchet people; as you go backward among the records and monuments of history; you find increasingly finer types of men, more thoughtful literature, more wonderful feats of engineering, marvelous erections of sheer physical strength, every evidence of finer physique, of longer lives, of brighter minds. Your cave dwellers, your stone age people are comparatively modern. The history of every race has been one of degeneration, without the life-giving power of God's truth. In Africa where a generation ago were found brutish cannibal fetish-worshippers, we find the excavations of gold mines scientifically worked ages before. In America, we found stone-age savages roaming the woods among ruins and mounds erected by a far superior race. In Asia, huts of loose stones and mud cower against the remains of walls of massive strength which have stood since before the

dawn of written history. Take away the pyramids, the Sphinx, the ruins of Baalbec, the great wall of China, the cuneiform inscriptions of Babylon, the writings of Confucius and of Moses: then we will be more ready to listen to your late fancies about slow gradations upward from animal intelligence. This old Book says, God made man perfect. It says that He gave him dominion over all the works of His hand. The anthem of creation begins in joy.

Then came the discord of evil. To say that it was not foreseen and permitted and woven into the plot, is to conceive of God as less than god. No musical creation is complete without its minor chord. But neither man nor angel ever was made to sin. The existence of evil in God's world has but one moral and rational explanation. It is that somewhere back amid the beginnings, one of God's sons, endowed with freedom of choice, freely chose to sin and thus became the tempter of others. Oh, what a crash of doom swept the chords of creation when the first of God's children turned to sin! The wail of hate struck in where hitherto love and joy had been dominant. All too soon the tempter found his most facile prey in man. If this had not been so; that golden age of innocence to which the universal traditions of mankind point backward would have lasted long enough to leave its monuments of godlike power. Man fell, as angels had fallen, and the rough harsh notes came faster. Fear hushed the

response of man's heart to God, deceit struck its false chord, offered its cowardly excuse and accusation, judgment pronounced its primal doom of exclusion and of toil. Soon murder shrieked its dissonance after the mutterings of envy, and remorse and fear groaned their drear lament over a bitter fate. How that discord of lust and rage and terror has sounded through the centuries, how it lingers still! But oh! thank God! just in the beginning of the discord of sin came the first new harmony of redemption. God's blessed promise of a new humanity triumphing over Satan with the God-man as the Captain of its salvation, Abel's sacrifice of atonement and of penitence strike the first notes of a new accord between God and man. This has been the ravishing melody of the ages. It has grown clearer and sweeter and stronger. It has thrilled in many million humble hearts. Far back in the patriarchal age, Job sang in the midst of his trouble, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He will stand at the latter day upon the earth." The Psalms pulsate with the theme of rescue from sin and sorrow. Isaiah and all the prophets exult in the vision of a coming Saviour. "Many prophets and righteous men," Jesus said "have desired to see the things which ye see, and have not seen them." "Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it and was glad." During all these centuries of earth's waiting for her Redeemer, heaven was thrilling with relief from its

sadness over earth in the prospect of Christ's mission. When He came to be born as the Son of Man, heaven could no longer contain its joys; but sent a multitude of its host to sing the good news to listening ears of earth. Every true joy-song in the heart of man all these sad centuries has been an echo really of heaven's music of redemption. Professor Tyndall, wishing to demonstrate the wave theory of sound, had a wooden rod coming up through several stories of a building. The bottom rested upon the sounding board of a piano; upon the top in his lecture hall rested a violin. An unheard musician performed upon the piano below, and the violin gave forth the same strains faintly above. So there is a wireless telephony of heaven's joy in every heart on earth that thrills with the ecstasy of pardon. And wherever the glad tidings of great joy are proclaimed on earth, in sermon, song, or story, heaven, in its turn, echoes with its all-compensating evangel.

There is nothing more pervasive than harmony. Discords war with each other and stop bluntly. Harmonies catch from wire to wire, from heart to heart, and linger in diminishing waves. How the harmonies of redemption are triumphing amid all the short-lived blaring noises of this world! There is prophecy in every note of perfect, universal melody by and by.

“ My life flows on in endless song;
Above earth's lamentation,
I catch the sweet, though far-off hymn
That hails a new creation.
Through all the tumult and the strife
I hear that music ringing;
It finds an echo in my soul —
How can I keep from singing? ”

The theme of the book of Revelation is an echo from the future as well as a vision of it. The book is full of voices. John on Patmos hears the resolved harmonies of redemption swelling by several successive gradations to a completed chorus. First he hears the choral testimony of the four symbolic living creatures full of eyes and of the four and twenty elders singing the new song with their harps before the throne set in heaven. He, too, hears a voice from heaven as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder, the voice of harpers harping with their harps. These also sing the new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders, a song which no man can learn but the hundred and forty and four thousand sealed ones from the symbolic tribes of faith's greater Israel. Only those who have experienced sin and redemption can sing that song. Again he hears the voice of many angels round about the throne, the number of whom is ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud

voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." Besides, John hears the song of them that had gotten the victory over the beast, as they stand on the sea of glass before the throne having the harps of God, singing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, the song in honor of God's glorious triumph over all enemies. Along with his vision of the new heaven and the new earth, John hears a great solo voice out of heaven in recitative proclaiming that the tabernacle of God is with men and that He will wipe away all tears from their eyes. After the sealing of the hundred and forty and four thousand, John beholds and lo, a great multitude which no man can number of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues are standing before the throne and before the Lamb clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands. These in turn cry with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation (be ascribed) to our God which sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb." And now, in our text, John gives us the echo of what we may unerringly call the completed chorus. All the voices of the universe have come into it. Not one is silent, not one is discordant. Angelic spirits that have never known sin or sorrow are blending their praises, trained through the ages, with the fresh outbursts of the latest redeemed.

Those the smoke of whose torment has been going up to the ages of ages at last are in the chorus singing the deepest notes of rejoicing for deliverance. Hell's weeping and gnashing of teeth have turned to sobs of contrition leading up to pæans of praise. John hears every creature — above, around, beneath — coming into touch with the one great theme of rejoicing which thrills the universe with praise. He even conceives of the sea as containing intelligent beings capable of understanding and joining the song. So he dimly feels the existence of other beings than those which inhabit the surface of our own planet, inhabitants, perhaps, of other spheres who will have their testimony to give in song to the only Saviour. Oh, what a jubilee! Oh, what a *finale*! Worth its ages of preparation; worth everything it has cost humanity and God! Not too glorious to be the perfectly reasonable and inevitable consummation. Every stage of the piece and plot has held this as its manifest trend and destiny. All that has gone before would lose its meaning without this conclusion. Often we have been bewildered by the complexity of the plot; but does anyone suppose that God's great oratorio of the ages can possibly end in a minor key?

Thank God! each of us here will be in that completed chorus. It is for each of us to choose this morning whether it shall be with heart-songs of mellowing peace dating from this moment.

We too are among the number whom Christ has bought and redeemed with His own precious blood. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin — all my sin, all the world's sin. It avails for the sin of the universe. The whole world will yet accept the sacrifice which is great enough for the need of all, and which would fail of its full redeeming capacity and purpose, if all did not freely accept it. Sooner or later; then why not now? Come and join the choir. Along with those who by voice and life are singing God's praise among living men, sings the choir invisible, whose music makes the gladness of the world. There is a place waiting for us in the choir invisible. Let us make our lives shout for God! Some Hindoo converts were advised by their missionary not to sing so loud in their meetings. They explained that in their former pagan worship those who shouted loudest were considered most pious. "And shall we not sing with all our hearts for Christ," they asked, "when we used to shout so loud for Buddha?"

So when we think of the mighty music festival we will be in in heaven by and by; when with the Beloved disciple on Patmos we catch the backward echo of that completed chorus around God's throne at last singing with their faces toward the ages of eternity yet to come: "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb to the ages of the ages:" when we hear the last trem-

bling voice of penitence growing stronger in exulting praise; we rejoice, even here in the beginning of the strife, with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Even here, by anticipation, we sing the new song of Christ's universal triumph surely coming at last: "Thou art worthy to take the book" (of the meaning of God's world) "and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." Again, and again, and again we hear the shout, the refrain ringing out from heaven, echoing up from earth, sounding back from hell: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!" When on Calvary's cross Christ cried, "It is finished!" the keynote, then and there, was already struck for the COMPLETED CHORUS.

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